LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LEHIGH COUNTY

July/August 2021 Volume 69, Issue 1

The VOTER

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President's Message

Dear League Members,

I am both excited and humbled to serve as the next president of our Lehigh County League.

Molly Faust deserves a great deal of gratitude for serving our League as president more than once over the years, and for having done a wonderful job guiding our Board and members these last two years.

Our mission to "Defend Democracy and Empower Voters," takes on special significance during times like this, when our democracy is being tested in many ways. Recent legislation will no doubt bring about many changes to our election code, and voter education will become a crucial function of our League.

As you read this message, numerous bills seeking such changes to our elections are being considered in Harrisburg. HB 1300 will require us to take a good look at this all-encompassing legislation at both the state and local levels.

We are still hoping to end gerrymandering and are hopeful that the LACRA (Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act) Bills (HB 22 and SB 222) will be given the attention they deserve in the days to come. We have also created a new campaign for populations who generally do not feel empowered and who need to be encouraged to see the importance of their vote. We have named this campaign, "Voting is Your Super Power," and we will be launching this campaign in a few short weeks.

We are fortunate to have a phenomenal Board of Directors who are ready and very willing to get to work; but we will need the help of our members as well. We will keep you informed through *The Voter*, emails, and social media as to what is happening and how we will be conducting our Hot Topic Events this season.

Looking forward to an exciting year with every one of our valued members.

Yours in League,
Mary Erdman

Barbara Connolly and Cheryl Winters-Tetreau

LEAGUE MEMBERS

Are you wondering what tabling events look like? Interested in helping at events? Connected to a potential partnering organization?

Contact Barbara Connolly at email@lwvlehighcounty.org for information about voter services/education/registration & tabling events.

Board Notes

The Board of the Lehigh County League of Women Voters met twice since the last *VOTER* on May 13 and June 10. Due to COVID 19, the meetings were held virtually. The following are highlights of the two meetings which are not being addressed in other articles in the newsletter.

Barbara Williams, Treasurer, reported that the League has a balance of $ 16,333.83 in assets for the month ending May 31.

Mary Erdman, President, presided over her first Board meeting on June 10 and welcomed Chris Herbener to the Board as our Vice President, Programs. Chris and the Program Planning Committee will be developing a list of speakers for the 2021-2022 Hot Topic Lunches. The Board is planning to commence in person luncheons this fall. To facilitate this, Chris and the planning committee will be looking at accessible lunch venues during the month of June and report back to the Board in July.

The Board approved two designs for postcards created by Terri Purdy, Special Projects Director, which will be used at upcoming tabling events. The postcards reflect our message, "Voting Is Your Superpower." They will include a listing of websites with voter information and the contact information for Lehigh and Northampton County Voter Registration offices. The postcards will be in English and Spanish.

Molly Faust, Michelle Graupner, Terri Purdy and Mary Erdman will be our delegates to the 54th Biennial State Convention. The convention will be held virtually on June 18-19.

Rochelle Kaplan, Secretary

Help Keep our Government Directory Up to Date!

The 2021 Government Directory is available in print and online. The online version is frequently updated to reflect changes in local municipality and school district information.

If you know of any upcoming or recent changes to any offices listed in the directory, please let me know. I can be reached at: cheryl.tetreau@gmail.com or you can send changes to: email@lwvlehighcounty.org.

Cheryl Winters-Tetreau, Government Directory

Sample of postcard designed by Terri Purdy & Canva

Voter Registration and Tabling

Our tabling and voter registration activities will get off to an exciting start in July as we participate in-person at the Sacred Heart Community Day in Allentown. The event will take place from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm in front of Sacred Heart Hospital, 421 Chew Street. The event will feature local organizations and provide us with an opportunity to get out the word about our many voter services, register new voters, and meet community members. Our message, ***"Voting Is Your Super Power",*** is intended for every voter across Lehigh County.

The LWVLC has also been invited to again participate in Rally in the Valley, a free music festival and community event to celebrate recovery sponsored by the Sync Recovery Community. ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks in Bethelehem will host the event on Sunday, September 12th from noon to 5:00 pm. This inspiring event drew over 4,000 attendees in 2019. We are looking forward to a great day of sharing vital voter information. You can find information about the day at www.SyncRecovery.org.

During the past year, we have had numerous community organizations partnering with the LWVLC in voter registration and information initiatives. Libraries, food banks, and senior community centers, as well as religious and social institutions, have all been instrumental in helping with our efforts during a challenging time. Thanks to all for their support and commitment. We look forward to maintaining these relationships and creating more as we move towards the municipal election on November 2, 2021.

Barbara Connolly, Vice President, Voter Services

Legislative Reapportionment Commission Update

On May 3, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court appointed Mark A. Nordenberg as Chair of the LRC. Marc Nordenberg's career includes more than forty years serving the University of Pittsburgh as the Dean of the School of Law and Chancellor of the University. He currently serves as the Chair of the University's Institute of Politics and Director of the Dick Thornburg Forum for Law and Public Policy. Both the Institute and the Forum provide nonpartisan venues that foster education, discussion, and research on policy issues affecting the region, state, and country.

Mr. Nordenberg also has served in public service positions for both Democratic and Republican elected officials. His academic and public service background gave him instant credibility and respect from the four partisan members of the LRC- House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff, Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa, Senator Kristen Phillips- Hill (designee of Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward), and House Minority Leader Joanna McClinton.

The respect which his fellow commissioners gave Mr. Nordenberg could be seen during the first organizational meeting of the LRC on May 26. Chair Nordenberg emphasized that the LRC would conduct an open and transparent redistricting process. In support of those principles, the members of the LRC unanimously passed resolutions to follow the open records law and to provide live streaming of each of their meetings so that the public can participate.

Of particular interest to the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and Fair Districts PA was the resolution on prison gerrymandering introduced by Representative McClinton. Previously, Fair Districts PA, the League, and several other organizations submitted a letter to the members of the LRC asking the commission to count incarcerated people in their home communities, not their place of incarceration. Representative McClinton's resolution mirrored this request. Chair Nordenberg thanked Rep. McClinton for bringing this to the attention of the LRC and stated that during the next two and a half months, the commission would address prison gerrymandering, as well as other law and policy issues that would guide the LRC's work. He closed the meeting committing to a fair and deliberative process.

To follow the work of the LRC and to watch the first LRC meeting go to:
https://www.redistricting.state.pa.us/commission/ws.redistricting.state.pa.us/Redistricting/Resources/Video/May_26,_2021.mp4

At the LRC website you can sign up to receive notifications of the meetings and work of the Commission.

Rochelle Kaplan, Secretary/Advocacy

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force

As the representative for our League, I took part in the last DEI Task Force meeting for the year which was on June 3. All of these meetings were held on the Zoom Platform. I found it somewhat disappointing to be told that only half of the Pennsylvania Leagues have participated in this task force.

At the meeting, it was stressed that DEI should be in everything the League does, from our outreach programs into the community, to how we conduct our organization's business. We discussed ways that Leagues can incorporate DEI principles in our work. Listening sessions with our membership were suggested as a way to measure where our League is at in thinking about DEI. Education is important; book clubs were promoted as a way to introduce members to the history of racism. (Many of our sessions were devoted to learning about this history).

The moderator (and designer of the course), Jennifer Hanf ended the meeting by asking that each attendee send 3 'top assets' which will help the individual's League to build equity and also to let her know how the State League can help. I feel that our outreach programs (such as voter registration in underserved communities) are assets for our League. I stated that the State League can help by letting us know what other Leagues are doing and by putting together a short presentation that we could use with our members.

Jennifer Hanf will make a short presentation at the PA Convention on the work of the DEI Task Force.

Molly Faust, DEI representative

LWVPA 2021 Biennial Convention Focuses on: The League of Women Voters as the Keystone for Democracy

The Convention this year was held virtually and although it was reduced from 2 days to 1 1/2 days, all business was completed and we heard many motivating speakers.

President Terri Griffin welcomed the attendees and introduced the first speaker, Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, a former national League president who addressed the challenges facing the League in its attempt to create an organization which represents the diversity we find in modern society. She spoke at length about the involvement of women of color (Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native American) who were instrumental in helping win the vote for women after the turn of the century until the present. Despite their historic support of women's suffrage, most of these women did not gain the guaranteed right to vote until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins was followed by PA Acting-Secretary of State (nominated by Gov. Wolf to be the permanent secretary) Veronica Degraffenried, who spoke to the great work that was accomplished during this pandemic, ensuring that Pennsylvania elections were secure, that voting was accessible, and that results were audited fully. Her vision for the work of both the League and the Pennsylvania Department of State was that our goal should be to "create bridges, not barriers to the ballot box," and that she and the Department of State are committed to work towards that goal for all Pennsylvanians. She welcomes the work of the League in these efforts.

There were many speakers who reported on numerous League programs and local Leagues reported on some of their successful projects which we hope to examine in our own League during this coming year.

The keynote speaker on Saturday was Dr. Deb Turner, the president of LWVUS. She complimented the LWVPA for our work on voter registration and education, and on the outstanding voter turnout numbers in our state. She spoke at length about our commitment to maintaining our nonpartisan approach, and clearly described how that does not mean that we must be nonpolitical when carrying out our mission of "Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy."

Carol Kuniholm gave a wonderful presentation highlighting our major advocacy projects and what we may be focusing on in the future.

There were many novel ideas to come from this convention, and in the days ahead I will discuss these with board members who were also in attendance. There are wonderful ideas and challenges for our own League. We are anxious to share some of the great ideas as possible projects for LWVLC in the near future.

Thank you to those who joined me in attending: Molly Faust, Michelle Graupner, Chris Herbener, and Terri Purdy.

Mary Erdman, President

Hot Topics Luncheon Planning

A committee meeting was held to consider future Hot Topics Lunches and look at various locations in order to attempt to find a meeting space without steps. Sometimes the steps are challenging for even the hardiest among us. Soon we will be scheduling a meeting with others to garner thoughts and ideas for programs in the upcoming year.

It's exciting to work with a new Board of Directors and finally meet in person once again.

Stay Tuned!

Chris Herbener, Vice President Program

Instagram Update

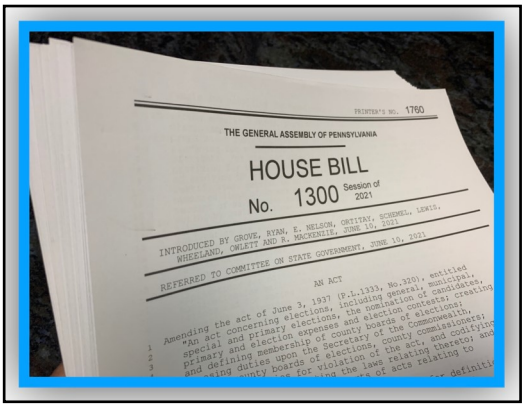
We currently have 708 followers of our Instagram account @lwvlehigh. We started the venture almost a year ago. Our intention is to continue to encourage community engagement and appeal to citizens in Lehigh County. If you have not checked us out, please do so and tell your family and friends!

Michelle Graupner, Voters Guide

Many Expected Changes to the Pennsylvania Election Code

The Chairman of the House State Government Committee, **Seth Grove**, recently introduced an extensive bill seeking to make more changes to the Election Code than have been made since its inception in 1937. **HB 1300** contains 147 pages of some good changes that would streamline how counties conduct and count elections in the future; but there are also some very controversial changes.

Most often, a bill will be introduced, co-sponsors will be collected, and a determination will be made as to whether it deserves a hearing, debate, and vote within the assigned committee. The process most often takes several months to reach this point. This bill, having been introduced by the man in charge of the process, sped through these steps in less than a week! HB1300 was introduced on June 10th and voted out of committee on June 15th.


PRINTER'S NO. 1760

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1300 Session of 2021

INTRODUCED BY GROVE, RYAN, E. NELSON, ORTITAY, SCHEMEL, LEWIS, WHEELAND, OWLETT AND R. MACKENZIE, JUNE 10, 2021

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, JUNE 10, 2021

AN ACT

Amending the act of June 3, 1937 (P.L.1333, No.320), entitled "An act concerning elections, including general, municipal, special and primary elections, the nomination of candidates, primary and election expenses and election contests; creating and defining duties upon the Secretary of the Commonwealth, and ing duties upon boards of elections, county commissioners, county boards of elections, and the electors; and conferring for violation of the act, and providing penalties thereof; and the laws relating to definiti

Concerns regarding this bill are many. Republicans in the Senate, specifically the Senate State Government Committee, were not asked for their input. Nor were the Democratic members of the House State Government Committee consulted. This bill was too long for members of the House State Government Committee to adequately read and absorb the proposed changes in the time allowed. Inadequate time also prevented Democrats from challenging some of the more subtle forms of voter suppression found within this bill.

As stated above, some of the proposed changes are good; however, there are many controversial pieces to this bill that need to be debated. This bill would require Voter ID, which is extremely controversial. It also would allow drop boxes to be available for only seven days prior to an election. In addition, HB1300 creates an unnecessary Bureau of Audits, not under the Department of State, but under the Auditor General. These are just a few of the debatable changes.

The League will be monitoring this bill and the way in which the majority party may try to get it passed by bypassing the governor. Stay tuned.

Mary Erdman, President

64th Annual Meeting of LWV of Lehigh County

The 64th annual meeting of the League of Women Voters of Lehigh County was held Saturday, May 22, 2021 at 10am using the Zoom platform. Twenty four members registered to attend the meeting – a number which was well above the twenty percent quorum necessary to conduct business.

This was the first virtual annual meeting held by our league. All information requiring membership approval had been emailed to the membership 30 days in advance of the meeting as per our bylaws, and was presented via power point for discussion and vote during the meeting. The votes were cast using the 'raise hand' function. The program items were interspersed with photographs of league activities throughout the year - Voter Registration and Tabling, Government Directory, Voter's Guide/Vote 411, Social Media, Liberty Bell Museum 100th Anniversary Exhibit, Hot Topics Luncheon, Publication Distribution, Running for Local Office Workshop, and the National Day of Action.

The following business was conducted: a) appointment of a reading committee for annual meeting minutes; b) adoption of bylaw amendments; c) adoption of 2021-2022 Budget; d) adoption of 2021-2022 Local Program, and e) election of Officers, Directors and Nominating Committee.

The nominating slate which was elected follows: President (2021-2023) – Mary Erdman; Vice President- Program (2021-2023) – Chris Herbener and Secretary (2021-2023) – Rochelle Kaplan.

Nominating Committee (Chair is chosen by committee members): Cecilia Birdsell, Margie Dunn and Pat Swan.

Directors: Membership (2021-2023) – Margie Dunn; Website (2021-2023) – Terri Purdy.

Molly Faust, Immediate Past President

Sample of postcard designed by Terri Purdy & Canva

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LEHIGH COUNTY

League of Women Voters of Lehigh County
P.O. Box 3275
Allentown, PA 18106

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LEHIGH COUNTY

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

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 <u>not</u> tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

Contributions to the LWV Education Fund (LWVEF) <u>are</u> 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