LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LEHIGH COUNTY

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The VOTER

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President's Message

Dear Members,

Spring has sprung! The temperatures may not say Spring, but we know that during this time period we are busy getting ready for: our Annual Meeting, planning a new budget, choosing new Hot Topic speakers, and nominating and voting on Board members. We are also looking at many new projects and how our efforts will meet our mission and our goal to serve our entire community.

Motivated by those who have come before us, we are moving forward in meeting our mission of "Defending Democracy and Empowering Voters." We are also moving forward on expanding and embracing our newly adopted "Diversity, Equity and inclusion" Policy. We have formed a new Book Club centered around the ideals of DEI and invite others to join us.

We are living in a time period where our democracy is being tested daily and there are those who wish to divide us as a nation. Through our programs and activities, our goal is to call out that which limits voter access, harms our democracy and aims to divide us. This will take a great deal of advocacy, diplomacy, and well-planned programming to bring our entire community together in protecting our representative form of government.

We hope you will attend our Annual Meeting and participate in the process. Your League has been busy, and this election season it will take participation from our many loyal members to ensure democracy and voting rights for all people of Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley are protected.

Join us on May 21st as we gather to look at what we have accomplished, and plan ahead during this very important year. We hope to see as many of you as possible at this year's Annual Meeting. And thank you for your continued membership and support.

Yours in League,

Mary Erdman, President

See articles inside for opportunities to get involved!

Spring 2022 Voters' Guide

The Voters' Guide for the primary election is set to be published by *The Morning Call* on Thursday, May 5th, 2022 with the primary election to be held on May 17th, 2022. The Pennsylvania State League of Women Voters (PALWV) utilized vote411.org to gather candidate information, correspond with candidates, and have candidates upload answers to questionnaires. Our local League assisted with reaching out to candidates to verify that an invitation to participate had been received, as well as to encourage them to complete the questionnaire by the deadline.

The Guide will include state and federal races covering Lehigh and Northampton County. Due to limited space in the Voters' Guide, some of the candidate information was truncated but the full version of each candidate questionnaire can be found on vote411.org. Links to vote411 and the current edition of the Voters' Guide can be found on our website under Voter Services.

The LWVLC will be distributing copies of the Voters Guide to locations throughout Lehigh County on Friday, May 6. To volunteer to help with distribution, please call or email Donna or Charlie Barker. lissabrad@aol.com or charlesabarker1953@gmail.com

Michelle Graupner, Voters Guide Chair

Membership

We had our Membership Booklet updated for 2022. I mailed them out to all members. If you did not receive a booklet, please let me now at 610 298-8946. We also will have copies available at our Hot Topic Luncheons, in case you would like an additional booklet. A special thanks to Ann Bartholomew for all her help in editing the booklet.

As of the end of April, we have 75 members in our League. We hopefully will have a few late membership renewals. Also, we have many people join through our website. Again, tell all your friends, neighbors, relative and colleges to check out our website to view all the programs we are involved with and hopefully they will join.

Margie Dunn, Membership Chair

Margie Dunn, Donna and Charles Barker with Government Directories

Government Directory 2022

The 2022 Government Directory is now available online at our website. In it you will find contact information for all state and local Lehigh County governments and school districts. You can also receive a printed copy by calling Donna Barker at 610.392.0669 or emailing her at: lissabrad@aol.com.

This year we instituted a new process for updating and producing the directory. It all went very smoothly, and we look forward to working this way with Christmas City Printing in the coming years.

As always, we are looking for support from the community to help cover our printing and distribution costs. If you know of any company or organization that would be interested in sponsoring the Directory, please email Cheryl at: cheryl.tetreau@gmail.com.

Cheryl Winters-Tetreau, Government Directory Chair

Publication Distribution

In April, 3000 copies of the Government Directory 2022 were made available to 119 offices, legislators, and organizations throughout Lehigh County by 16 LWVLC volunteers. The volunteers fanned out across 14 recipient zones, delivering stacks of the League's annual guide to local, state, and federal officials in our region.

The following League members volunteered to make deliveries: Chris Herbener, Penny Holman, Kathy Stagl, Julie Ambrose, Pat Hudson, Terri Purdy, Margie Dunn, Sue Phillips, Barb Williams, Barb Connolly, Molly Faust, Mary Erdman, Doris Glaessmann, Michelle Graupner, & Charlie & Donna Barker. The Government Directory is available to members at the sign in table at our Hot Topic Luncheons, or upon request.

Donna & Charlie Barker, Publications Distribution Committee Chairs

LWVPA Government Policy Committee

LWVPA Government Policy Committee is actively tracking legislation that impacts voters and the underpinnings of democracy. On our radar currently:

SB982, passed in the Senate by a 37-12 vote, bans outside funding of county elections operations. Specifically, the legislation prohibits county election offices from seeking funding from third party nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations to help defray the costs of running an election. However, it is important that League members let their legislators know that proper funding of the voter registration office is vital for safe, secure, and accessible voting. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania supports the position of the Budget and Policy Center recommending that the state provide an additional $1000 per precinct to each county election office. An amendment to that effect was offered during consideration of SB 982 but was not approved by the Senate. The legislation now goes to the House. It is likely that it will be vetoed by Governor Wolf.

SB1200 requires voters to either use the postal service to mail in ballots or go to their voter registration office and hand deliver the ballots. It eliminates that use of all drop boxes. The legislation was introduced and passed in the Senate by a 29-20 vote in less than a week without public hearings. Disability Rights Pa is submitting a letter to the leadership of the House and Senate and the Governor explaining that removing drop boxes creates an obstacle to voting for disabled individuals. Rather, then eliminating drop boxes, the DRP suggests educating the public on who can be a designated agent for the purpose of dropping of a ballot for a voter. LWVPA is a co-signer on this letter and encourages members to tell their representatives that drop boxes should not be eliminated.

SB690 (and HB 1369) will allow unaffiliated voters, voters not registered with a party, the right to request either the Republican or Democratic ballot in the primary without having to register with either party. Registered Democrats and registered Republicans would continue to be offered their party's ballot. Pennsylvania is one of only nine fully closed primary states. The prime sponsors of the legislation are Senator Dan Laughlin, Republican, and Senator Maria Collette, a Democrat. The League advocates that this legislation be voted out of the Senate State Government committee and given a floor vote in the Senate.

There are several other pieces of legislation LWVPA is watching that have been sitting on the House and Senate calendars without action since the beginning of the year pertaining to redistricting, VoterID, judicial gerrymandering, and an overhaul of the election code. May and June are a busy time for the General Assembly, so stay tuned!

Rochelle Kaplan, Secretary & LWVPA Government Policy Chair

Looking for Speakers

For next year's Hot Topics Luncheons
Give Recommendations to Chris Herbener at
email@lwvlehighcounty.org.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Report

The State League's DEI task force has been meeting via Zoom twice a month for the past 16 months. In that time, it has explored the subject of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. It has organized a sub committee whose mission is to construct a program which can be used by leagues to implement DEI in their respective organizations.

The task force is led by a State League board member Jennifer Hanf and is made up of members from local leagues across Pennsylvania. One of the monthly meetings is devoted to a review of the work done in the previous month by the DEI subcommittee. There are five education modules planned. The second monthly meeting features lectures on DEI subjects and is open to the membership at large. Both meetings are virtual.

Our local league has already started the process of using the 'DEI Lens' to look at our league activities. Our first step was including the DEI statement in our bylaws – this addition had been approved by the membership at the 2021 annual meeting. We have switched our Hot Topics meeting place to a building which is handicap accessible – our previous site could only be accessed by stairs which eliminated those with mobility issues. We publish our voting information in Spanish as well as in English. We are working to establish relationships with community groups in the city of Allentown, an area where voter turnout has been traditionally low, to promote the importance of voting. We have organized a book group which will focus on DEI topics. All these initiatives will make our outreach more inclusive.

Molly Faust, Past President & DEI Representative

FIX HARRISBURG - A Recently Formed Initiative!

This year many cities in Pennsylvania and throughout the nation are reporting an increase in deaths by guns. Many are violent, but surprisingly almost 60% of these deaths are self-inflicted gunshot deaths. We can debate the need for mental health initiatives; however let's focus on what are called "red flag" gun laws. These laws would, *temporarily,* take guns out of the hands of those who show "red flag" causes and it has been very popular - nearly 50% of our citizens (F & M poll) would like to see a "Red Flag" law passed as soon as possible, including many gun owners!

This is how law-making is *supposed* to work:

1) Idea/bill is written
2) Assigned to a committee
3) A hearing and then a vote is held, if passed -
4) Goes to floor for debate and vote
5) If passed, then similar steps in the other chamber
6) If passed, then given to the Governor to sign into law
7) If vetoed, it goes back and steps are repeated for a possible veto override vote

However, in Pennsylvania we have a set of archaic rules which essentially gives the power over *all* bills to *only six members* of the majority party. These six people are: 1. House Committee Chair 2. House Majority Leader 3. Speaker of the House, and in the Senate: 4. Senate Committee Chair 5. Senate Majority Leader and finally, 6. Senate President.

At any time, anyone of these six can stop a bill dead in its tracks. They control the agenda completely. When any bills are introduced from majority, minority or bipartisan legislators - these six control it's future completely, regardless of citizen interest.

The example illustrated is the passage of a "red flag" law. This law was assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. It was dead upon arrival even though most Pennsylvanians support it! It will get no hearing, no debate and no vote. Why? Committee Chairman, Rob Kauffman (R) stated that he is "done with gun control," and further stated that: "We will not be considering red flag bills in the House Judiciary Committee as long as Chairman Kauffman is chairman."

This is an example of how legislation in Harrisburg *really* happens. The same treatment was enacted when Fair Districts PA supported a number of redistricting bills. It came down to a committee chair and most likely the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate. That is *not* how a representative democracy works!

The rules say that the above is acceptable. These rules are passed in a most peculiar, undemocratic manner. On the first day of the Legislative Session, for example, HR 1 states that the "rules" may NOT be amended. Then, they vote on HR 2 - which are the rules. Seems a bit backwards. It is! The legislators do not have time to read them and vote the power away to amend them. Hence, Pennsylvania voters' requests are always in the hands of six majority leaders.

Fix Harrisburg is a new initiative to bring attention to these archaic rules and push for change by the next Session. Hopefully, our Legislature will become more responsive.

Bills that people want to see enacted: property tax reform, fair gun safety laws, minimum wage increase (lowest of all surrounding states), gift ban laws, lead issues, and equitable school funding to name a few.

Please go to FixHarrisburg.com to sign a petition and find more information on this campaign to enact better rules surrounding lawmaking in our state.

This is a combined initiative of both the League of Women Voters and Fair Districts PA.

Mary Erdman, President

Spotlight

Ann Bartholomew

Ann is a longtime league member having joined in 1973 when her son was 5 years old. She was relatively new to the area, in fact, relatively new to the United States having grown up in Scotland. Ann came to the United States when she married her husband, Craig. She said she came from a family which had a history of being very involved in the community. It was another league member who suggested that Ann might like to join our organization which, at that time, was known as the Allentown League of Women Voters.

Ann became active right away. She handled organizing the unit meetings which were held in people's homes monthly – a morning and an evening meeting each month. Having never done this before, she quickly learned on the job.

Through the years, Ann has held a variety of positions with our league. She served twice as president and for many years was editor of the Voters Guide and the Government Directory. She was involved in the design of our first league website. She was one of several members who organized, designed, and ran our popular "Running for Local Office Workshop." In recognition for her outstanding service, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania in 1995 placed her name on the Anna Estes Strawbridge Honor Roll for outstanding leadership and service to the community.

Ann and her late husband had a great interest local history. They were founders of the Lower Macungie Township Historical Society and the Bartholomew Center at Camp Olympic. For many years, Ann has written and produced publications for the Canal Museum in Easton.

In her spare time, Ann liked to garden but it has become discouraging to have the neighborhood deer savor the fruits of her labor. She is thinking about container gardening on her deck – so far, the deer have not been bold enough to venture there.

Barbara Connolly

Barbara joined the league in 2019. A native of Dallas, PA (near Wilkes Barre), she has been a longtime resident of the Lehigh Valley. She said that a neighbor who was a member of our league suggested that she look into the organization. She liked what she saw. "I really appreciated that one could be educated about interesting stuff".

Barbara attended our "Meet and Greet" session held 3 years ago and signed up to help with several projects. She joined our Board and currently serves as a Vice President responsible for the Community Engagement portfolio, formerly titled Voter Services. She oversees setting up and staffing our voter registration table at community events and goes out into the community to educate groups about voting.

She participates in a State League Voter Services group, which meets virtually twice a month, to learn about new voting laws and to share ideas among local leagues. Barbara had to be flexible in planning voter events when covid restrictions were in place. She reached voters using Zoom presentations and distributing 'get out the vote' postcards. She stated that "our events are beginning to be in person again." Recently, Barbara and Rochelle Kaplan were part of the Fall Parkland Community Library event (in person) focusing on municipal elections.

Barbara is active in the community in other areas. She serves as a volunteer at the Lehigh Valley Hospital on 17th street. She participates in the Applewood Social Committee which plans events for the Applewood community and belongs to a neighborhood book club. Her favorite genres are non-fiction (especially historical biographies) and mysteries. Barbara also gardens – flowers only. She said she has no luck with vegetables.

Her current home project is completing a family genealogy album which will be a Christmas gift for her children – she hopes it will be completed in time for this Christmas. She and her husband enjoy their eight grandchildren.

Community Outreach Report

The LWVLC was pleased to participate in the Lehigh Valley Book Festival, a celebration of books, authors, and readers, held on March 26th at the Bethlehem Area Public Library. Co-sponsored by the library and Let's Play Books of Emmaus, the festival was an enjoyable and busy afternoon. Our coloring books for young people were especially well-received.

One of our most important initiatives for the year is extending our outreach to Allentown residents. Mary Erdman and I were excited to attend the 1st and 6th Ward Community Block Ambassador Meeting on Thursday, April 7th at the invitation of Darien Colbert of the Cohesion Network. We were given the time during a busy night to share LWV history and purpose. The conversation, enthusiasm and interest in participation in local government was inspiring. We plan to expand our engagement with the residents of the city as we approach the general election in November.

A Lunch and Learn program was held at Lehigh Valley Active Life in Allentown on April 20th. Primary voting basics, finding candidate information, and changes in political districts were the focus of conversations. We were able to demonstrate ways the LWV makes information for voters accessible, including vote411 and the Voters Guides.

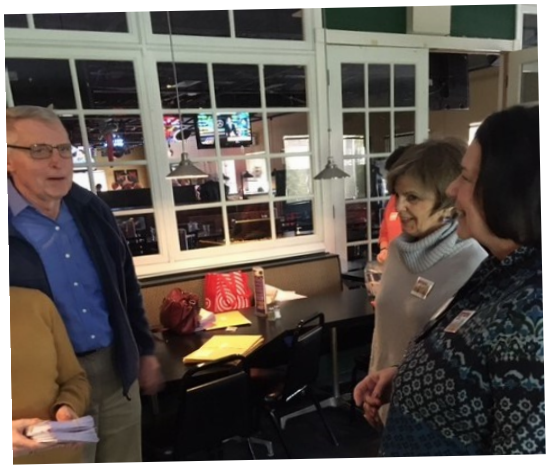
The LWVPA awarded the LWVLC a $500 Local Democracy Grant for locally based voter services and civic engagement work. Monies from this award will be used to increase and improve our voter outreach efforts across the Lehigh County. Postcards featuring www.vote411.org information were also provided by LWVPA and will be available at events prior to the May primary.

Contact me at email@lwvlehighcounty.org if you have suggestions for postcard distribution, community engagement ideas, or would like to become involved.

Barbara Connolly, VP Community Outreach

Notes on March Hot Topic Program : Insects

Leah Purdy gave an informative presentation on Habitat Creation for Native Beneficial Insects at our March Hot Topics Luncheon. She informed us how insects are crucial components of many ecosystems. One third of our food supply is dependent on insect pollination. Insects have important roles in removal of dead plant and animal materials.



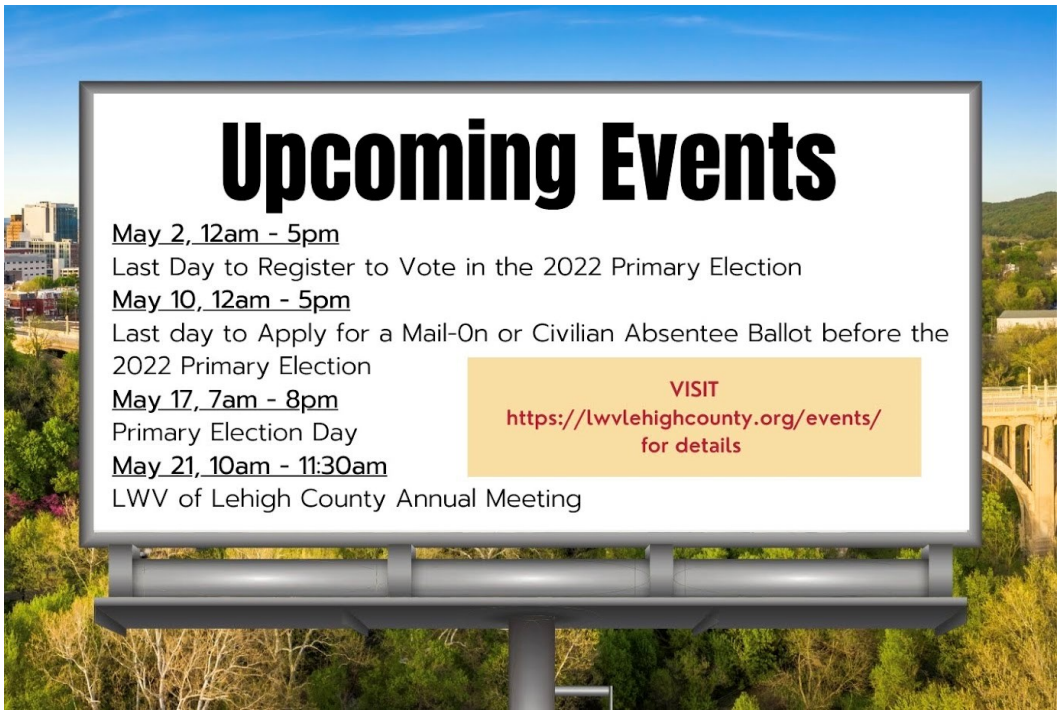
Charles Barker, Barbara Williams and Mary Erdman at the Hops at the Paddock.

Ninety-eight percent of North American bird species rely on insects as a food source. A concerning statistic is that forty-one percent of insect species saw a decline over the past decade. Causes of insect population decline include habitat destruction, urbanization, light pollution, heavy pesticide usage, and climate change.

What can you do to stem the decline in the insect population? There are some simple changes you can make to your garden to help. Leave your leaf litter when winterizing your garden. It provides an ideal winter habitat for insects. It also provides you with free mulch and fertilizer. Don't use a leaf blower, as they kill insects. When doing winter cleanup of your perennials and grasses, leave 12 inches of growth above the ground, which provides excellent habitat for native solitary bees. Bee hotels also encourage solitary bees to populate your yard. Solitary bees are three times more effective in pollinating than bumble bees. The most significant thing you can do is to plant native species. Most insects are only able to eat plants they evolved with (i.e., native plants). Non-native plants provide little to no value to insect populations. The National Wildlife Federation website provides native plant searches by zip code (https://www.nwf.org/nativeplantfinder/plants). The Pennsylvania Native Plant Society website has a list of nurseries that sell native plants (https://www.panativeplantsociety.org/native-plant-sources.html).

Spring is in full bloom, so there is no time like the present to begin planning updates to your garden that will make it a more insect friendly habitat.

Terri Purdy, Website



LWV Book Club

Our LWV Book Club is a go! Five members have signed up (so far) to read the first book club selection, "I'm Still Here - Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness." Austin Channing Brown's New York Times Best Seller is described as a *"powerful account of how and why our actions so often fall short of our words."*

Book Club members will choose how, where, and when to meet. Warm weather could provide an opportunity for an outdoors get-together, or the group might choose a virtual gathering. Most important will be the opportunity to share thoughts and perspectives on a complex and timely subject. Interested in exploring diverse subjects, participating in meaningful conversation, and getting to know other league members?More readers are welcome!

Contact Barbara Connolly *or* Mary Erdman if you would like to read this personal account of racial justice or would like more information. More information about the book and author can be found at www.austinchanning.com

Barbara Connolly, Vice President, Community Engagement

April Hot Topics Program: Shale Gas Transport

The April Hot Topic Lunch, our last of the year, was held live once again at Hops at the Paddock. Our speaker was enlightening and eye-opening for of us. Bob Elbich, an engineer among other careers, including firefighter, spoke about the dangers the population in the Lehigh Valley are exposed to by rail transport of massive amounts of shale gas. As residents of Lehigh Valley, we are aware of the considerable amount of train trackage in our communities. If there were an incident that caused a leak during transport, it could endanger people and property anywhere from one half to one mile from the site of the incident. In case of a fire or explosion, it would be difficult to evacuate in time.

Needless to say, the Hot Topic Lunches are informative and illuminating. We will meet during the summer to plan a schedule of topics and speakers for the 2022-2023 meetings. If you have ideas for speakers or topics you would like to learn about, please let me know. crizzy49@yahoo.com

Chris Herbener, Vice President Program

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 _____

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 2022

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

$35 if 35 years or younger

Please make check payable to LWVLC and mail to:

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c/o Margie Dunn
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New Tripoli, PA 18066