

COMMITTEE AND PORTFOLIO REPORTS 2021-2022

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

MOLLY FAUST

The state league's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee, which first convened in January 2021, has continued meeting monthly and sometimes twice monthly through the league year. I represented our league and attended all the sessions, which have taken place on Zoom. In these sessions, we explored the history of systemic racism, tackled readings on diverse subjects and discussed the diversity in our own leagues.

A subcommittee was formed in the fall to design learning modules to be used by local leagues in exploring diversity in their organization and in the work they do. There are to be five modules highlighting how DEI applies to a member personally, how it applies to the work of a committee and how it applies to the league as a whole. Three of these sections have been completed. The work on this is ongoing.

One outcome of this year's DEI committee work has been the creation of a small grant program to fund local DEI projects. Our league submitted a request for money for our DEI efforts, which includes the purchase of books for our newly formed Book Club.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BARBARA CONNOLLY

This past year the designation of the Voter Services and Tabling Committee was changed to Community Outreach to more accurately describe our activities and mission. We continue our central mission of providing information regarding voter registration, mail-in voting, and running timely get-out-the-vote campaigns. In keeping with this new name, this year has brought efforts to engage a diverse Lehigh County community and foster partnerships with a wide variety of organizations.

Voting is Your Superpower, our postcard initiative and message for all Lehigh County citizens, was launched at the Sacred Heart Community Day in Allentown in July of 2021. The postcards include information for voter resources and a QR code for direct on-line voter registration. Prior to the November election these postcards and ***Local Elections are Key*** postcards were distributed at a number of local colleges, libraries, and civic organizations.

The LWVLC also participated in a number of other pre-election community events during the summer and fall of 2021. These included Rally in the Valley, a day to celebrate recovery held at Artsquest in Bethlehem and attendance at the Bethlehem Rose Garden Farmers Market. In addition, we were invited to table at the Bethlehem Area Public Library Book Sale, and at the fall Community Day sponsored by the Lehigh County Office of the Public Defender. Ripple Community Inc. in Allentown welcomed the league in a voter registration and education afternoon event.

Presentations focused on voter education remain a league priority, especially in the lead-up to elections. The Parkland Library hosted *The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of Municipal Elections* in September 2021. Lehigh Valley Active Life hosted a Lunch and Learn program in April 2022 focused on changes in political districts due to redistricting, primary ballot basics, and finding candidate information. Postcards provided by the LWVPA featuring www.vote411 information, a valuable and appreciated league resource, were available for distribution prior to the May 17th primary.

Thanks to the generosity of league members we were able to print a League of Women Voters Coloring Book for young children. The books were especially popular at the Lehigh Valley Book Festival sponsored by Let's Play Books in Emmaus and the Bethlehem Area Public Library in March, 2022.

League members have attended the 1st and 6th Ward Community Block Ambassadors Meetings in Allentown at the invitation of Darien Colbert of the Cohesion Network. At the meetings we have been able to share

information about the LWVLC, the impact of informed voting, and tips about how to navigate the challenges of redistricting. We plan to continue exploring partnerships with other community groups in the city.

This year the LWVLC was awarded a \$500 Local Democracy Defenders Grant to support our local civic engagement work. Monies will go toward supporting and enlarging our voter outreach efforts in Lehigh County and the city of Allentown.

The support and involvement of league members is an invaluable asset as we look forward to a busy summer and fall in 2022. Thanks to all!

VOTERS GUIDE**MICHELLE GRAUPNER**

As usual, we intend to produce two printed Voter's Guides kindly provided at no cost by *The Morning Call*. The first Voters' Guide was released on May 5th, 2022 and made available to citizens for the primary election 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 was received to participate as well as encourage them to complete the questionnaire by the deadline. We received 500 copies of the Voters' Guide to distribute. The copies for the primary election were distributed to local libraries, community organizations, members, and our Day of Action events. Any additional copies were to be given to the Lehigh County Voter Registration office to make available at polling places.

VOTERS GUIDE DISTRIBUTION**DONNA AND CHARLES BARKER**

The Fall 2021 Voters Guide was distributed in October to 87 libraries, senior centers, government agencies, colleges, and cultural associations. Fourteen hundred copies were delivered by 11 League volunteers. Due to a generous increase in the number of copies donated by The Morning Call, we were able to place Voters Guides in post offices, diners, and grocery stores in addition to our usual drop sites.

The Spring 2022 Voters Guide was delivered by League volunteers in May. We received 500 copies, and focused on getting the Guide to high-traffic areas such as libraries, the Office of Voters Registration, college student centers, and cultural centers. Our 5 volunteers provided Guides to 33 recipients.

GOVERNMENT DIRECTORY**CHERYL WINTERS-TETREAU**

This year we instituted a new process for updating and producing our Government Directory. It all went very smoothly, and the directories were picked up from Christmas City Printing on April 1. We distributed 3,000 printed copies, and the directory is also available at our website.

We would once again like to thank our sponsors, Barry Isett & Associates, the County of Lehigh, Keystone Consulting Engineers, and the LWV Education Fund. 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.

GOVERNMENT DIRECTORY DISTRIBUTION**DONNA AND CHARLES BARKER**

The 2022 Government Directory was delivered by League volunteers in April. Sixteen volunteers provided Directories to 119 government offices, libraries, legislators, township buildings, and school districts, which had been grouped by locations into 14 zones in order to facilitate delivery. In all, 3000 copies of the Government Directory were provided to Lehigh County agencies.

THE VOTER**DONNA AND CHARLES BARKER**

Six issues of The Voter newsletter were produced bimonthly. Donna Barker edited the newsletter this year, with Molly Faust doing layout. Terri Purdy has been posting a digital version to the League's website. "Spotlight," a new feature that profiles a veteran member and a newer member, was added in the March/April issue.

Currently, the League mails 26 copies of each newsletter to legislators and donors, and 14 copies to members who requested mailing service. We have also been placing copies of The Voter in a few local libraries in the hopes of raising the League's profile in the community.

FAIR DISTRICTS PA/FIX HARRISBURG**MARY ERDMAN**

The completion of redistricting in Pennsylvania was finally culminated once all legal challenges and reviews were completed. And although the maps are not perfect by any means; the maps are more fair than they have been in many years. Statistical evidence shows that these are the most fair maps in over twenty years. Now it is our job to educate our voters about the new districts especially in Lehigh County. We have a new, open legislative district - HD 22 and a new, open senate district - SD 14. These are big changes as well as a big change for SD 16, which unfortunately is now one of the most gerrymandered senate districts in the state.

Fair Districts PA was not successful in calling for the creation of an independent citizens redistricting commission; however, we were successful in making sure, like never before, a great number of "eyes" were on this process. There was more input about the new districts than at any other time, except for the Congressional Map, which unfortunately had to be decided by the PA Supreme Court. The map that was offered by the House State Government Committee was created without input from one party and very definitely and unfairly benefitted the other party. This proved once again, that legislators should not be drawing maps. But the work of Fair Districts PA has not stopped. We have changed our focus.

Carol Kuniholm, director and chair of Fair Districts PA once said that: "nothing will change unless this changes." She was referring to a complete overhaul of the archaic procedural rules that dominate how bills are passed in Harrisburg. This was extremely evident when FDPA attempted to support legislation that called for an independent citizens redistricting commission. Over the course of six years, there were two hearings, no debates and no votes on this issue even when half of the General Assembly was co-sponsoring bills to create such a commission! Basically, "bipartisan solutions deserve a vote." But, unless the procedural rules are changed, improvements will not happen.

Fix Harrisburg is a brand new campaign to convince lawmakers that we need to alter these rules. Right now, five majority leaders have complete control over the: agenda, hearings and votes on any bills offered by legislators of either party. We have many good legislators on both sides of the aisle who write good legislation; but unless some of these five people are behind it, these bills often end up dying at the end of a session. Citizens are not being heard. Issues like: fair funding of education, a minimum wage increase, property tax reform and universal lead testing are just a few issues where the people have not been heard at all.

The five majority leaders who have this control are: President Pro-tempore of the Senate, Majority Leader of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Majority Leader of the House and any Majority Committee Chair.

Fix Harrisburg is a campaign of FDPA, a part of the League of Women Voters. Other organizations who are involved are: The Committee of 70, Education of Voters of PA, March on Harrisburg and the National Association of Social Workers.

For more information go to www.fixharrisburg.com and sign the petition.

GOVERNMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

ROCHELLE KAPLAN

“Where we stand” <https://www.palwv.org/where-we-stand-1> is the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) official policy position on legislative and governmental issues. A reading of this document shows that LWVPA has been at the forefront of voting reforms, election security and government accountability in Pennsylvania for many years. The Government Policy committee was established to keep a close watch on legislation that impacts these areas, report back to the board and local leagues, issue action alerts, provide talking points and testimony to the General Assembly in these areas.

After the 2020 census data was finalized, the committee developed guidelines for nonpartisan redistricting. These guidelines were given to the Legislative Reapportionment Committee and the House State Government Committee in the form of written and oral testimony by Susan Gobreski, Director, Government Policy. Now that redistricting has concluded, the committee is focused on legislation that could change the way we vote in Pennsylvania. The League supports legislative efforts that provide open, fair, and secure access and opposes legislation that sets up unnecessary obstacles to voting.

What has taken up much of the work of the Government Policy Committee is monitoring the use of constitutional amendments as a form of legislating and working with a consortium of other statewide good government groups to address this. In the past 12 months, more that 70 pieces of proposed legislation call for amending the Pennsylvania Constitution.

The constitution is justifiably difficult to amend. A proposed amendment starts out in the Legislature as a Joint Resolution, meaning it must be passed by the House and Senate without change. This legislation must pass in identical form in two consecutive legislative sessions. After a required advertising period, a ballot question is presented to voters. Unlike regular legislation (Acts), the governor cannot veto a Joint Resolution for a Constitutional Amendment. Voters have no power to weigh in before a ballot question is placed on the ballot.

To be sure, there are proper subjects for constitutional amendment, such as rights of the citizens, explicit and implicit; the structure of the government; and corrections to government abuse. Unfortunately, this year, the League has seen proposals which would upset the balance of power among the three branches of government; curtail citizens’ rights to participate in voting or democracy; and circumvent the governor’s veto of legislation which represents one party’s political agenda, instead of working toward bipartisan legislation. In the League’s view, these are improper subjects for constitutional amendments.

Moreover, the process by which constitutional amendments have been passed has caused concern. There has been legislation voted on in committee a day after introduction and gotten to the floor of the House or Senate in less than 48 hours; majority party-line votes in committee; disregard of amendments by minority members in committee; and absence of public hearings that would present vital testimony as to the problem the constitutional amendment seeks to solve. While voters do have a chance to vote on these amendments, the proposed amendments are placed on the ballot in the Spring primary, when fewer than 20% of all voters turn out and voters unaffiliated with a party don’t normally go to the polls at all. Wording in an amendment is often arcane and convoluted. There is simply insufficient public education for voters to understand the long-term pros and cons of their “Yes” or “No” vote. It also must be said that voters have a hard time saying “no” to

constitutional amendments. After all, one assumes it must have been thoroughly vetted, otherwise it would not be on the ballot.

In the coming year, the League will continue to remain vigilant to ensure that voting rights are not abridged by legislation and that the Pennsylvania Constitution remains an enduring, stable foundation that protects citizen rights and enables government to function, regardless of politics.

MEMBERSHIP

MARGIE DUNN

As of May we have 76 active members in our League. This year we had 8 new members join our League. That is a remarkable number considering that for most of the year we did not have many in person gatherings. Our new members are Kim Gabreski, Dianne Hewlett, Kathy Dunn, Candance Herrman, Helen Schwartz, Merrily Weld, Marleen Shields, Emily Chukoskie, Mary Tomlinson and Robert Tench. Our presence on Facebook, Instagram and our website really made a difference!

The National League keeps a database of all present and past members. When you have a change of address, phone number or email, please contact me so I can enter it into our national database.

We are a strong League because of the many members who volunteer their time and ideas for every debate, project or event that the League provides to our community. Please remember to invite new people to attend Hot Topic Luncheons in the fall and other League events or to review our website so that they can see what the League is all about.

HOT TOPICS LUNCHEONS 2021-2022

CHRIS HERBENER

This year we began our Hot Topics meetings in person at the Hops at the Paddock restaurant. Again, going into winter, Covid became a threat and we had to return to Zoom meetings. The lineup of speakers was informative and enlightening. The following is a brief account of Hot Topics by month: September 2021, Amanda Owens, Executive Director of the Justice Bell Foundation, spoke about the significance of the Justice Bell's role in securing the passage of the 19th Amendment, Voting Rights for Women. In October Dawn Gottschall who is Executive Director of Community Action of Lehigh Valley (CALV), gave a talk about the importance of CALV, an anti-poverty organization, in helping improve the quality of life through nutrition programs, housing, youth, revitalization, and assisting with business startups. Phil Armstrong, Lehigh County Executive Director, in November provided us with a state of the county report. His annual visits are always illuminating. The December Hot Topic event was from Catharine Kesseck, from VAST, Valley Against Sex Trafficking. She spoke of teenagers exploited by sex traffickers being as young as 11 to 14. Bloom for Women operates four homes in the Lehigh Valley of PA to help women survivors of sex trafficking to help them start over and begin to heal from their lives. Professor Chris Borick, another yearly visitor, joined us again in January to give us details of the polling by the Muhlenberg Institute of Public Opinion. His review of polling results questioning confidence in the 2020 election by polling of the same people with the same questions showed the confidence went down. In February the speakers, Bill Stauffer, Executive Director for PA Recovery Organization Alliance (PRO-A) and Shannon Scobell, an EMS and nurse in training, explained the seriousness of addiction in the Lehigh Valley and how great is the number of fatalities from overdose. March brought to us Leah Purdy who has a degree in Landscape Architecture and pursues a MS in Natural Resource Stewardship and currently works for Resource Environmental Solutions (RES) as a Regulatory Specialist. Leah spoke of habitat creation for beneficial insects, which was fascinating and made many of us want to stop mowing the lawn. April, the final topic of the year, we joined each other at the restaurant for lunch once again. Bob Elbich, an engineer, firefighter, and a multitude of additional careers and abilities, presented the dangerous risks to the population by rail transport of massive amounts of shale gas. A special thanks to Mary Erdman and Terri Purdy who made these presentations possible.

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS

TERRI PURDY AND MARY ERDMAN

Each year our League receives an interview packet from the Pennsylvania League that includes interview questions to ask the state legislators who represent the citizens of Lehigh County in the Pennsylvania State Assembly. The purpose of these interviews is to 1) learn where our legislators stand on specific issues so the League can better advocate our positions, 2) educate our legislators about issues the League cares about and 3) help our league build a relationship with our legislators.

This year there were 7 interview questions spanning the areas of environmental, social and governmental/election policies. Our League was requested to interview 9 state legislators and we had volunteers to cover all of the interviews. Four interviews were completed. Mary Erdman, Michelle Graupner and Cydney Wilson interviewed Representative Michael Schlossberg (D-132). Mary Erdman, Barbara Williams and Cydney Wilson interviewed Representative Peter Schweyer (D-22). Mary Erdman and Barbara Williams interviewed Senator Lisa Boscola (D-18). Terri Purdy, Rochelle Kaplan and Cydney Wilson interviewed Representative Jeanne McNeill (D-133). You can read the results of the interviews at <https://lwvlehighcounty.org/legislative-interviews/>.

We received no responses from Representatives Gary Day (R-187), Ryan MacKenzie (R-134), Zachary Mako (R-183) and Milou MacKenzie (R-131) and Senator Patrick Browne (R-16) each of whom were contacted numerous times via email and phone to request interviews.

We want to thank Cydney Wilson, a student at Muhlenberg College, for participating in this process with us. We also want to thank Representative McNeill for offering Cydney the opportunity to shadow her for a day in Harrisburg. And finally we want to thank the legislators who participated in the interviews for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with us.

FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

MARY ERDMAN AND ANN BARTHOLOMEW

Our League Facebook page continues to be a source of information about voting, voting deadlines, and general information about local, state, and national news related to our League mission.

We have increased our Facebook views to about 166 monthly with a 200% increase in “Likes.” Our goal is to have more of our members view, like, and share our posts during coming year. We disseminated a great deal of information and made sure to celebrate all cultural holidays for people in Lehigh County. The public seems to really appreciate these recognitions through their “likes” and “shares.”

The top five posts in the last 9 months and number of “views” have been the following:

Reminder of Mail-in Balloting deadline posts approx. 1200

Announcing Justice Breyer’s Retirement. 473

LWV Voter’s Guide Announcement 434

Congressional Redistricting Announcements with maps 356

Action Alert for HB 38 - Judicial Gerrymandering Opposition 248

Our goal is to increase our monthly views as well as further engagement through “likes” and “shares.”

Our Twitter continues to be a quick source of information generated by the National, State, and Lehigh County League of Women Voters. The ease of “retweeting” tweets from the State LWV, especially, provides members and the community with up-to-date information.

Our Twitter community has grown over the last year. We have doubled the number of people and organizations following us from 44 to 88 in the last year. And we have increased which organizations, state offices, and news sources we follow from 69 to 96.

Again, we would like to see more members utilize our Twitter page. If you need help getting started we have many Board members who can assist you.

Research shows that Facebook is utilized by more women than men and roughly around the ages of 35+. Twitter is more likely to be utilized by men. Our goal is simply to get more members to use both.

A “thank you” to Terri Purdy for the creation of most of our interesting graphics.

INSTAGRAM

MICHELLE GRAUPNER

Board members introduced the idea of creating a business Instagram account for the League with the hope of increasing our online presence. The account was created on August 14th, 2020 and has roughly 825 followers. Our Instagram handle is lwvlehigh or, you can access it from our website <http://www.lwvlehighcounty.org>. Through our almost 200 posts, we post relevant voting information such as mail-in ballot instructions, deadlines, court rulings, and motivational voting quotes. Our intention is to emphasize our community involvement by promoting Vote411, Voters’ Guide, Government Directory, and FDPA.

WEBSITE

TERRI PURDY

This year our website (<https://lwvlehighcounty.org>) was completely redesigned to make it easier to navigate, to provide a primary focus on voters, to provide a secondary focus on our local league and to provide a cleaner look.

We added an Events Calendar (<https://lwvlehighcounty.org/events>) to keep our League members and the community current with our activities, community activities that are relevant to voters and election related dates. The Events Calendar provides the capability to visitors to register online for League events, such as our Hot Topics Luncheons. We also added a capability for visitors to subscribe to the Events Calendar so that events on our calendar are reflected in their own digital calendars. This keeps subscribers up to date on new events and any last minute changes made to events.

We also added an Action Alerts page (<https://lwvlehighcounty.org/action-alerts/>) that lets our visitors know when there is an urgent need for action. An example of an action alert was the urgent request from the Lehigh County Voter Registration Office for poll workers, especially Spanish speaking poll workers. Another example was a request from our League for visitors to call their state representative to tell them to vote no to the Judicial Gerrymandering House Bill 38.

Part of the maintenance process on the website is to post a PDF of the annually-updated Government Directory (<https://lwvlehighcounty.org/new-government-directory/>). We also post all of the sections of the Government Directory online with convenient links to make it easy for visitors to navigate to specific sections of the Government Directory rather than having to page through the entire document.

Finally, we have added an analytics capability to the backend of the website so we can monitor traffic to the website. This enables us to see when the website is most often visited. We see very large spikes in the number of visitors just prior to elections. The analytics also provide us insight into the most popular pages on the website. The Government Directory and Events Calendar are visited the most annually. However, as expected, the Voters Guide (<https://lwvlehighcounty.org/voters-guide/>) is very popular just before elections.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

TERRI PURDY

Zoom: Last year, due to Covid-19, our League purchased a Zoom Pro account to enable us to host meetings longer than the 40 minutes available on a basic free account. We retained the Zoom Pro account this year to continue meeting virtually due to Covid and we recognized the convenience of virtual meetings for our busy Board members. This year we hosted 12 Board meetings, 3 Hot Topics Luncheons and 13 miscellaneous meetings online.

YouTube: Our League took advantage of the Zoom capability to record meetings. We recorded the Hot Topics Luncheons that were held virtually via Zoom and posted them on our YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8zEgQAIFqj1ipNbUGI_rbA) so they are available for viewing by folks who are unable to participate in the meetings.

Postcard Campaign for Fair Districts in PA: This year we engaged our members in a Postcard Campaign to encourage local voters to contact friends and neighbors to encourage them to engage in the redistricting process and to demand that our legislators put an end to gerrymandering. We provided postcards, scripts, the names and addresses of registered voters and stamps to our volunteers. We want to thank our postcard campaign volunteers for taking the time to write to local registered voters and request that they support fair districts in Pennsylvania.

Member Survey: This year we sent a survey to all of our members to determine how we can better communicate with them. We want to make sure that our messages are getting to our membership through email, our social media accounts (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook) and our website. We offered help/training to our members with Zoom and accessing us online.

Graphics Support: Special Projects provided graphics support to our Community Outreach and Social Media Directors over the course of the year by designing postcards, a coloring book, a Hot Topics Luncheon bookmark and posts for our social media accounts.

NATURALIZATION

CARYN SCHOENTHAL AND MICHELLE GRAUPNER

The League ensures that voting related materials are available for distribution at the naturalization ceremonies to welcome new citizens to our community. These materials include a welcome letter from the League, copies of the Government Directory, instructions for registering and voting, and a voter registration form.

LEAGUE TELEPHONE (610-432-1456)

PAT SWAN

The League telephone is used to provide League information, especially for those who do not have easy access to computers. Government Directories, voter registration forms and mail-in ballot request forms are mailed upon request. Many callers express appreciation for all we do.