LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

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The VOTER

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President's Message

Dear Members,

I sincerely hope that you are enjoying all that summer brings: great weather, picnics, festivals and family get togethers. This is a time when our League is busy planning for the upcoming year with tabling events, registration drives, Hot Topic Lunches, candidate forums and debates, a late summer League picnic and "Meet and Greet," and keeping an eye on legislation that may attempt to make it harder to vote. We are hoping that our members, and especially new members, will feel welcome to participate in many of these events that our Board is hard at work planning.

Our projects and activities always keep in mind our mission to "Empower Voters and Defend Democracy", which is being constantly tested in this heated political climate.

I want our members to know that we have a dynamic, creative Board which works very hard all year round as is evidenced by our website at: www.lwvlehighcounty.org .Our newly formed book club, with an emphasis on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), is off to a wonderful start. If you are interested in joining, please email the League at:email@lwvlehighcounty.org.

We are growing! As of this week, we have 78 members. We welcome all who are new and invite you to come out and volunteer at some of our activities. We are a friendly group and are very dedicated (many for decades); we want to get to know you. Find something that will interest you and volunteer - there is plenty to do.

Enjoy your summer, please stay safe, and please accept our invitation to get involved.

Yours in League, Mary Erdman

If you or someone you know is thinking of running for local office, consider attending the League of Women Voters January 2023 "Running for Local Office Workshop".

Registration opens this November.

State Legislative Report

The House and Senate returned on June 23; below is a summary of legislation to watch:

HB 38—A constitutional amendment to create Judicial districts for the statewide appellate courts. The legislation remains on the House calendar without a vote. If this is passed in August, it will be on the November ballot. If it is passed by the end of November, it will be on the 2023 primary ballot.

SB 322- Absentee and Mail in Ballot Reform -The county chairperson of each political party (or designee) can be present to watch the votes being counted. In addition, the measure provides that individuals allowed to watch shall have a clear line of sight to view and hear the proceedings. Only those ballots received by 8:00 PM Election Day may be canvassed. The only exception would be for valid military-overseas ballots timely received. Finally, if the county board of elections is not satisfied with the signature on a ballot, the county board shall notify the voter (i.e., mail, e-mail, telephone) that their signature doesn't match what is on file and that they must provide the county board a signature within 6 days along with proof of identification. The notification would stipulate that the voter's ballot would not be counted if they fail to comply.

Status: This legislation was passed in the Senate State Government Committee.

SB 428- Presidential Primary date change. The date of the presidential primary would be changed from the fourth Tuesday in April to the third Tuesday in March.

Status: This was passed in the Senate by a 49-0 vote and was voted out of the House State Government committee.

SB 573- Poll Watcher Empowerment Act.—A registered voter from Pennsylvania will be eligible to be a poll watcher in any precinct in the state of Pennsylvania. These watchers will not be required to be a resident of the county, municipality, or precinct they are appointed to. Candidates for office will be able to appoint two poll watchers per precinct. Additionally, each political party will have the opportunity to appoint three watchers per precinct. Poll watchers can stand six feet from the location where ballots are counted. Additionally, penalties will be incurred on any election officials who blocks, impedes, or otherwise intimidates a poll watcher while performing in his or her official duties on Election Day.

Status: The legislation passed the Senate and is now on the June 27 House calendar.

SB 956- Constitutional Amendment on abortion. An amendment to the Pennsylvania constitution stating that there is no right to an abortion or abortion funding.

Status: This amendment is on the Senate June 27 calendar.

SB 982/HB2044- Prohibiting Outside Groups from contributing to election operations. - The elimination of any third-party funding of election operations without providing additional state funds to county election operations. There would no longer be state grants to elections offices; rather, the election office would have to keep track of expenses made for election administration and submit receipts to the state for reimbursement. There is an implication that reimbursement would be limited to precinct in person voting and not mail in voting. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania opposes SB 982.

Status: The legislation was passed in the Senate and passed in the House State Government However, it was re-referred to the House appropriations committee.

SB 1182- Constitutional Amendment to change the way the chair of the LRC is selected.—The constitutional amendment would require the chair of the Legislative Reapportionment Commission to be randomly selected from a pool of retired supreme court judges. Currently, if the legislative leaders cannot select the chair, then the Pa Supreme Court selects the chair.

Status: The amendment is on the June 27 Senate calendar.

Rochelle Kaplan, LWVPA Voter Services Director

Community Outreach Report

Our League has been pleased to participate in a number of most enjoyable festivals and celebrations in the past months.

On May 21st we attended the Grand Opening of Star Health Practices held at St. Luke's Sacred Heart in Allentown. The well-attended family event was incredibly well-organized and featured speakers, music, and food, along with a wide variety of community organizations. Our coloring books have been especially well-received by children and their families.

After a closure lasting four years, the Tilghman Street Bridge in Allentown was officially reopened on May 26th. The Executive Education Academy Charter School organized the community block party on the bridge itself that afternoon. Businesses, organizations, and schools celebrated opening day with games, music, and opportunities to share resources and information. We had a great view of coming changes in the city and enjoyed many interactions with students and attendees.

Juneteenth, celebrating Freedom Day, took place at Cedar Beach Park, Allentown, on June 19th. The park filled that afternoon with families enjoying the music, while speakers conveyed the history and importance of Juneteenth. We were happy to be included in this beautiful and motivating day!

In the coming months we will have many more opportunities for members to help with tabling and informational events. We schedule multiple member volunteers, especially for longer events. If you are interested in checking out what our community outreach events look like, have ideas, suggestions, or would like a bit more information, give me a call or email me.

Barbara Connolly, Vice President, Community Outreach

Membership

Our membership is growing little by little. As of June 20th, we have 78 members. We had two new members join our League this month: Amy McCarty of Hellertown and Katia Reeb of Allentown. Both new members joined through our League website.

We are planning a "Meet and Greet" sometime in August. More information will follow. Our last Meet and Greet was 4 years ago- mainly because of Covid. It was very successful, with around 25 members attending. It will be nice to get together socially and preview all the events we have planned for this year. We have had 4 new members join since January, and we need to welcome them to our League.

Margie Dunn, Membership

Barbara Connolly, Cheryl Winters-Tetreau and Helen Schwartz at Tilghman Street Bridge voter registration table.

Hot Topic Luncheons 2022-2023

Mark your calendars for the second Monday of the month starting September 13, 2022 when our Hot Topic Lunches will begin again. There will be a wonderful assortment of fascinating, interesting, and informative speakers presenting many topics of importance to our members. Do you know a speaker, or have you heard a presenter you'd like League members to learn more about? Is there an issue you'd like us to explore? Then get in touch with me at crizzy49@yahoo.com, so we can put the topic on our schedule. It would be great to have more of your input!

Chris Herbener, Vice President, Program

Why Do We Need to "Fix Harrisburg"?

Fair Districts PA has inaugurated a new campaign which was explained in our last *Voter.* Basically, because of archaic, procedural rules, it has become nearly impossible to get a bill passed unless one of the majority party leaders or a committee chair wants it to pass! That means that very often, bills that have the support of legislators from both parties don't have a chance unless a majority party leader calls for the passage. And forget the will of the people.

Legislators from both parties are frustrated when they write a bill that will benefit their constituents and then work to secure co-sponsors, only to watch it die in committee without even a hearing or a vote. *Good bills deserve a hearing, and a vote!*

Very rarely do we see expert testimony or have scheduled time for debate. Many popular bills go nowhere because they simply are not on the radar of a majority party leader or committee chair. This past year a constitutional amendment was discussed and passed in under ten minutes! That is not how a representative democracy should work.

"Fix Harrisburg" has been collecting petitions, holding presentations, and preparing messages to legislators recommending they not approve the rules in the beginning of the next session in January unless both parties agree to reform which will enable more bills to receive a vote. During this past session, over 40 bills dealing with many gun safety issues have been introduced by legislators of *both* parties and not one of them has received a vote, either because majority leaders do not want them or certain committee chairs want nothing to do with gun safety bills! Over 70% of the electorate wants gun safety legislation now. Voters are not being heard at all by this legislature.

Pennsylvanians have been asking for bills to be voted upon regarding topics such as: property tax reform, broadband access for all citizens, better energy decisions, equitable school funding, legislative ethics/gift bans, open primaries, minimum wage increase, childhood lead exposure testing programs, ending puppy mills. and the ability of county voter services to pre-canvass mail-in ballots before election day.

And we are still waiting.

If you would like to find out more about *Fix Harrisburg,* go to: www.fixharrisburg.com and begin by signing the petition!

Mary Erdman, President

LWVLC Book Club Update

The response to our call for a LWVLC Book Club has been enthusiastic with seven members eager to participate. Clearly, members of the league are committed life-long learners, willing to explore timely topics.

The inaugural meeting of the Book Club is scheduled for Thursday, July 28th. Austin Channing Brown's, "I'm Still Here - Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness"

is described as a critical resource in the modern fight for racial justice and was on the NYT Bestseller list for weeks. We are excited about reading and talking together. Following our meeting, we will share with League members our reactions to the book and this new endeavor. Information about Austin Channing Brown and her writing can be found at austinchanning.com.

Barbara Connolly, Vice President, Community Outreach

DEI Report

After a hiatus during the month of May, the Equity Team committee met virtually on June 2. We reviewed Module 5 of the DEI Learning Modules which have been generated over the last months by a hard-working subcommittee of five women. This concludes the initial review process.

At this meeting it was explained that this DEI committee had been established in response to a self-study done by the League as our 100th anniversary approached. We realized that we were not relevant and were losing members. We wanted to enter our second century strong, visible, and relevant. The study is a synthesis of many threads of work, including input from Leagues across the country, interviews with internal and external stakeholders, review of the larger nonprofit environment, and the professional expertise of consulting firms. It resulted in the creation of the Transformational Roadmap published in 2018. The Roadmap can be found on the National League website. Our LWVPA Equity Committee was one of the specific action steps to be implemented.

The subcommittee will finalize changes, prepare final accessible slide presentations, and create facilitator notes for the 5-part Module. The committee intends to launch the 5-Part Module Series in September.

The Equity Team meetings will continue through the summer. For the next meeting, members are to bring at least two stories or ideas that describe our local League's DEI needs and goals. Our book club is a good start.

Molly Faust, DEI Representative and Past President

Spotlight

Michelle Graupner

Michelle Graupner is a LWVLC director and serves as the editor of the Voters Guide. The first in her family to earn a bachelor's degree, Michelle matriculated from Kutztown University after completing a bachelor's program in political science. She also holds an associate degree in paralegal studies from Lehigh Carbon Community College.

After completing the Paralegal Studies Program at LCCC, Michelle pursued employment with Lehigh County. She has been a county employee since 2016, where she has held three positions within the Clerk of Judicial Records Office. She is currently serving as Office Supervisor, a position which Michelle enjoys and hopes to build into a career. In addition to her work in the Judicial Records Office, Michelle has volunteered with various political and community engagement organizations, with the LWVLC being her longest volunteer commitment so far.

The League's level of community involvement, particularly its mission of civic outreach with publications like the Voters Guide and Government Directory and its sponsorship of candidate forums, convinced Michelle to become a member. She said that she also enjoys the League as a place where all are welcome to work for the betterment of the community. A League member since 2018, Michelle immediately became involved with producing the Voters Guide. During the last few years, she has added the League's Instagram account to her responsibilities.

Michelle's favorite thing about League membership is being able to engage with the community. Good conversations and sharing others' perspectives on current events really hold her interest! She enjoys being a resource for the Lehigh Valley and helping people become more engaged in politics by encouraging voting and communicating with public officials. Michelle's family has also benefitted from her League involvement, as her contagious enthusiasm has inspired them, specifically her husband, Ron, to participate as well.

Donna Barker, VOTER Editor and Publications Distribution

Pat and Burke Swan

Pat and Burke Swan, natives of Canada, have been longtime members of our league. Pat joined in 1970 which would mean that she has been a member for over 50 years; Burke joined years later after retirement. They had come to the United States when Burke took a job with Bell Labs.

Pat said she had joined the League because she was interested in becoming involved in the community and she had heard we were a good organization. She remembers our League in those early years when we would schedule three unit meetings a month to study and discuss items of interest. These were held in various member's homes. Babysitting was provided free (Important because many members were mothers with young children. Pat's youngest was 3 years old at the time). Our League organized legislative dinners in which legislators were invited to attend and participate in a question-and-answer forum with members.

League members were encouraged to become active in other community organizations and Pat served on an advisory committee for the Bureau of Youth and Children and on the East Penn School District's Advisory Committee for Education. She organized and helped run the toddler playroom at the YWCA in Allentown.

Pat has manned the league telephone since 1984. She said the number of calls has fallen off through the years because the public has other avenues of getting voting information. In 2006, Pat joined the League board after she and Burke became US citizens. She took on the position of VP of Program and, with Sue Phillips, ran the Hot Topics Luncheon series, setting up speakers and securing the venues.

She and Burke have coordinated distribution of the Voters Guide for many years. Twice a year, they hosted a Bundling Party at their house where members gathered to help count out and 'bundle' the Guides for delivery. Pat and Burke then helped with the delivery of the Guides, driving to various sites in the county.

Pat said that she is "devoted to the League". She appreciates its reputation of fairness, safety, and good order.

Molly Faust, DEI Representative & Past President

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:

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