LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LEHIGH COUNTY

September/October 2022 Volume 70, Issue 2

The VOTER

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President's Message

Dear Members,

I hope your summer has been very restful and enjoyable. During these summer months, your Board has been very busy planning and organizing the many activities for the upcoming months. I did have the opportunity to attend the National Convention of the LWVUS held in Denver and brought back ideas and observations that should help us to better carry out our mission.

There were tabling opportunities, community meetings and activities, Book Club, planning for candidate debates, purchasing new items for our community outreach, DEI policy discussions and seminars, and welcoming new members during these summer months.

And we started the planning for our Running for Local Office Workshop which will be held on January 21st, 2023 and held our Meet & Greet Picnic with 35 of our members. And, you can read about our first Hot Topic Luncheon on September 12th.

We have some challenges this year as well. Our League will be working hard to oppose SB 106 which sets in motion a Constitutional Amendment that is a combination of many provisions from Voter ID, completely banning abortion, and will alter the balance of power among the branches of government in Harrisburg, just to name a few. We object to not only the content of this bill but also to the fact that the legislative process is being ignored and in its place, the majority leaders are using a constitutional ballot instead of the normal checks and balances of the three branches. We will be asking directly for your help to oppose this bill in the coming months.

There will be a few debates, lots of voter education, and voter registration followed by a getting out the vote (GOTV) campaign. We will need your help and your ideas.

We invite each and every member to join us in an active manner this year. Our mission of: Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy has *never* been so important. Please don't forget to check our: Website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for information about our League, events and activities. Welcome back and happy fall!

Mary Erdman, President

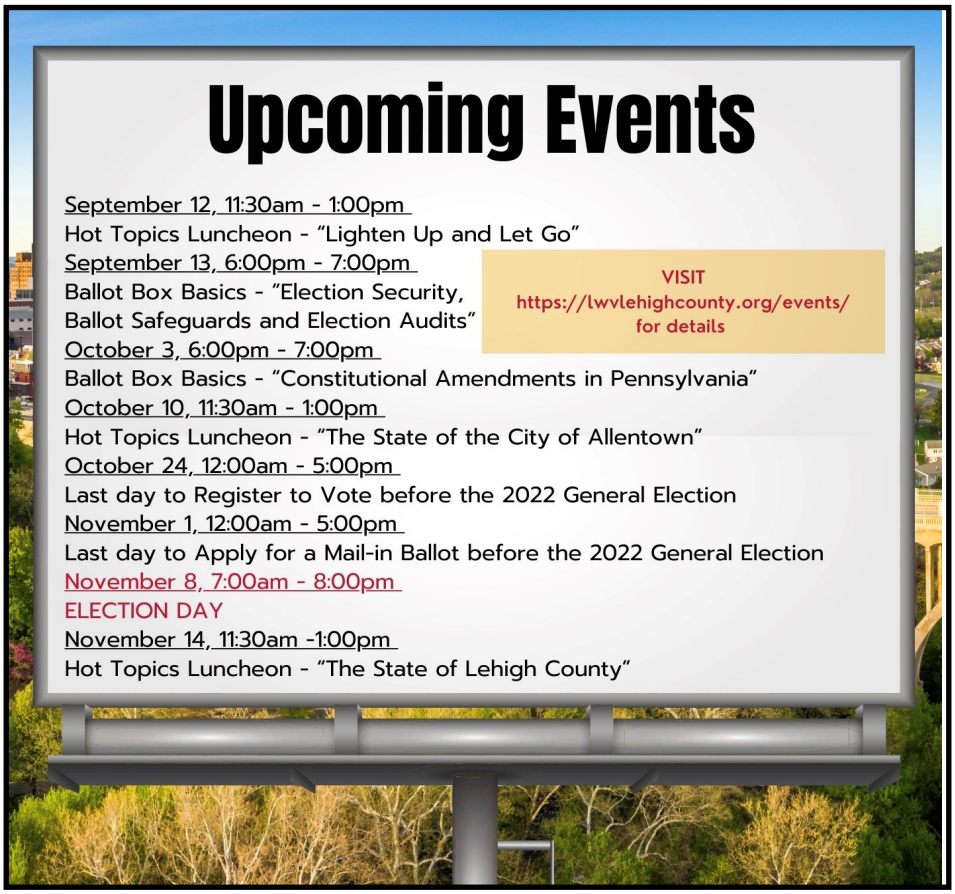
CONSIDERING RUNNING FOR LOCAL OFFICE?

Registration for the January 21, 2023 LWV's

"Running for Local Office Workshop"

will open up this November.

Watch for it on our events calendar at lwvlehighcounty.org/events



Membership

We will have our first in person Hot Topics Luncheon this month!

We will finally be able to see each other in person. We were one of the few Leagues in our state that had meetings virtually each month but it's always better to see each other in person and socialize around a table with good food.

This is an opportunity to invite someone you know to our luncheon so they can see first hand what a great League we have.

As of August 16th, we have 85 members. With our website, Twitter, and Instagram accounts we are really getting the word out virtually. We had three new members join our League: Kim Gobreski, Dianne Howlett and Sandy Freeman. I hope to see you all at the luncheon!

Margie Dunn, Membership

Update: Fall Candidate Debates/Forums

The candidates' campaigns for the: Senate, Congress, State Offices, and the State Legislature are in full swing now that Labor Day is behind us. Throughout the years, the League of Women Voters has been a trusted source of election information, providing voters with many services that enable people to learn more about the candidates. We are especially proud of our very popular *Morning Call Voters Guide*, our annual *Government Directory*, our nationally praised vote411.org website, and our well-respected debates and candidate forums.

We have invited each candidate for the local Congressional seat (PA-07),and the local candidates for each of the Legislative seats in Lehigh County, including the new Senate District 14 and the newly drawn Senate District 16 which now includes Bucks County, to debate their opponents.

Candidates Josh Siegel (D) and **Robert Smith (R)**, who are running for the **22nd Legislative District seat,** have agreed to a debate. This will take place **Monday, October 10th at 6:30 pm at the Lehigh County Conference of Churches, 457 West Allen, Allentown.** The doors open at 6 pm.

Candidates Peter Schweyer (D) and **Brent Labenberg (R)** have also graciously accepted an invitation to debate as they run for the 134th Legislative District seat, where Schweyer is the incumbent. Their debate **will be on Thursday, October 6th at the Lehigh Valley Active Life Center at 16th and Elm Streets in Allentown.** The exact times will be published when confirmed.

We are waiting for a few candidates to decide whether they will participate in the debates. Further information will be shared as soon as possible. In some races, one candidate has agreed to debate; however, some of their opponents have declined or are still considering. As a reminder to those candidates who have not yet agreed to a public debate, the League feels that it is only fair to allow citizens to know where they stand on the issues, and to answer questions about their candidacy. A public debate provides an opportunity for such informative discourse.

Stay tuned for more information in a member email, on Facebook, on Instagram, Twitter, and of course on our website.

Mary Erdman, President

Government Policy Update

HB 1369- Open Primaries

On August 16, HB 1369, a bill to open the state's primaries received its first House State Government committee hearing at Villanova University. The hearing was scheduled to last one hour, but in actuality, lasted for three hours. This legislation would expand voting rights to the million-plus independent voters in Pennsylvania. Notably, veterans make up a large segment of independent, non-affiliated voters. They were represented at the hearing by Jack Wagner, former PA auditor general, and Marilyn Kelly-Cavotta, a retired Army staff sergeant, who is the Director of Military Affairs at Moravian University in Bethlehem. She explained that telling a veteran that they cannot vote because of their independent status, "It's like telling a veteran, 'Thank you for your service, but not enough thanks for your voice to be heard in a primary election.'"

LWVPA submitted written testimony prepared by Diana Dakey, League of Women Voters- Lackawana and a member of LWVPA Government Policy Committee. She pointed out that by engaging more unaffiliated voters in the primary, candidates will be more engaged with issues that voters care about and will legislate in a way that is responsive to this wider electorate. State Representative Ryan McKenzie, HD 187, is a member of the House State Government. I would ask that you contact his office and urge him to support this legislation. Specifically, ask him to vote the legislation out of the state government committee and on to the house floor for a vote.

The link to the full house hearing can be found at: https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/CMS/ArchiveDetails.cfm?SessYear=2021&MeetingId=2433&Code=36&Chamber=H.

SB106 Litigation

On Monday, August 22, LWVPA filed an "Application to Intervene" in the petition filed by Governor Wolf challenging the constitutionality of SB106 and procedure used in passing the legislation. The League's motion to intervene can be found here: https://www.pacourts.us/Storage/media/pdfs/20220822/164051-aug.19,2022-applicationforleavetointervene(leagueofwomenvoters,etal.)).pdf.

In its motion to intervene, LWVPA explains that unlike elected officials, it is uniquely situated to intervene in this litigation challenging laws that affect voters. LWVPA expends considerable time and resources to protect the right of *all* Pennsylvanians to cast free and informed votes and to educate voters on the voting process in Pennsylvania, which includes constitutional ballot questions.

Further, LWVPA argues that SB106 not only infringes on those rights, but the legislation also reestablishes unconstitutional and unlawful age (21 years) and residency restrictions (90 days) that will directly confuse and disenfranchise voters. The League is asking the Court to enjoin the General Assembly from pursuing further action on SB 106.. LWVPA's explainer on SB106 can be found https://www.palwv.org/news/pa-proposed-constitutional-amendments-what-you-need-to-know.

Rochelle Kaplan, Member of LWVPA Government Policy Committee

LWVLC Book Club Report

The inaugural meeting of the LWVLC Book Club took place on July 28th. Our first book selection *I'm Still Here - Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, is Austin Channing Brown's memoir of growing up Black and female in majority white schools and churches. Austin was seven when she learned her parents had given her a traditionally male white name to hide her gender and Blackness from future employers.

Discussion about the book was lively and wide-ranging. Reflecting on our personal experiences of growing up in varying environments helped us make connections with the author's feelings in a way reading alone seldom does.

Comments from Book Club attendees:

I'm Still Here really made me think and forced me to view the world through someone else's eyes. It definitely took me out of my comfort zone and forced me to think about my interactions with others. I had to look at my built-in assumptions and biases. It reminded me of what Atticus Finch told Scout in To Kill a Mockingbird," You don't really know someone else until you step into their shoes."

What an interesting book! The discussion was lively and helped us to get to know one another. As a long-time LWV member it reminded me of the small discussion groups local LWV groups used to have.

A big part of the value and fun of (a book club) is the surprise of what one learns from the other participants.

I have never been part of a book club before and I didn't know what to expect - I really enjoyed the discussion of the first selection.

I really enjoyed the book club gathering. It reminded me of the unit meetings we used to hold in member's homes years ago to discuss issues of the day. The book club provides an excellent platform for educating ourselves on DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) matters.

I have already bought On Juneteenth. I did enjoy our first meeting!

First Meeting of LWVLC Book Club

Next Meeting of the LWVLC Book Club

The Book Club selection for November will be *On Juneteenth: a* historian's view of the nation's long road to Juneteenth, by Annette Gordon-Reed. Contact Barbara Connolly at email@lwvlehighcounty.org if you are interested in information about the book club.

Barbara Connolly, Community Outreach

Meet & Greet 2022

LWVLC held its first post pandemic Meet & Greet on September 25 in Emmaus Community Park. Thirty League members turned out to share the beautiful weather, enjoy delicious food, and greet old friends and new.

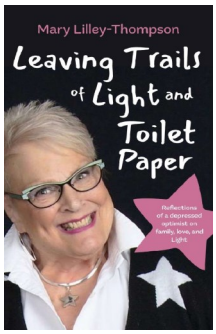
Board members discussed the workings of their respective committees and invited members to get involved with committees and activities during the busy year ahead. Displays illustrating the League's goals and activities clearly conveyed the mission that inspires the hard work of our membership.

Special thanks to the members of the planning committee for this lovely event: Terri Purdy, Mary Erdman, Molly Faust, Margie Dunn, and Barb Connolly. And special recognition goes to the grillmaster- Bill Erdman.

Donna Barker, VOTER Editor & Publication Distribution

Photos from Meet and Greet event at Emmaus Community Park

September Hot Topic Luncheon



"Lighten Up And Let Go" Please don't miss our first Hot Topic Luncheon on **Monday, September 12th** as **Mary Lilley-Thompson** speaks to us on the many benefits of humor, sanity, adjusting our attitudes and good old-fashioned laughter. Mary has graciously accepted our invitation to speak to our League before we begin what will be a very busy, important year!

If you need to feel energized, more upbeat, and less stressful, this is the Hot Topic Luncheon for you. Mary will share lots of practical tips along with her ability to impart fun, humor and wisdom. Often known as "Mary Lilley",Thompson is Erma Bombeck meets Dr. Ruth! She will be bringing copies of her book for purchase: "Leaving Trails of Light and Toilet Paper," which is a highly recommended book on Amazon. The write-up on Ms. Thompson's book describes: "A compelling book about dysfunction, forgiveness, life-changing transformation and a key to leaving trails of light."

This will be a great way to begin our season and be re-charged as we approach the work of the League for this year. Please join us and be ready for an uplifting experience and a lunchtime of fun!

The same timeframe will be followed: buffet lunch at 11:30 am, speaker at Noon. Remember our HTL is now located at **Madeline's in Fogelsville!** There are no steps and there is an elevator to the second floor!

Our October speaker will be Mayor Matt Tuerk, City of Allentown.

Welcome Back!

Mary Erdman, President

Why "FIX HARRISBURG?"

The starting salary for a Pennsylvania legislator is $90,335, which is the third highest legislative salary in the United States; it ranks only behind the states of California and New York. PA legislators also get raises which are tied to the cost-of-living increases based upon the US Department of Labor yearly figures. Not bad for full-time legislator. Illinois, another fulltime legislature, salaries begin at approximately $69,464. The difference is striking considering that Illinois passed 650 bills for the Illinois governor to sign into law last year.

Pennsylvania's governor received only 311 bills to sign over the last two years! Why the difference?

Pennsylvania legislative *procedural rules* allow only a handful of people to control the agenda; that is, the decision about whether a bill goes to committee and whether a bill will receive a hearing and then a vote. The people who control the agenda are the four majority leaders and committee chairs. Therefore, if these people are not interested in a bill, especially from the minority party, it may not even get to committee. Basically, good bills written by legislators on *both* sides of the aisle have an extremely difficult path to get to committee, unless they are supported by at least one of the majority leaders.

That is why many citizens of this state have not seen items such as: property tax reform, more equitable school funding, and bills to protect the environment ever see the light of day. *Fix Harrisburg* wants to do something about that.

Fix Harrisburg is a combined project of the League of Women Voters PA and Fair Districts PA (an arm of the LWVPA). If you would like to find out more, or get involved, visit their website at: www.fixharrisburg.com or scan the QR code displayed.

Mary Erdman, President

Community Outreach Report

On Saturday, July 23rd the LWVLC participated in the 14th Annual Blues, Brews, and Barbecue Festival sponsored by the Downtown Allentown Business Alliance in partnership with the City of Allentown. Lots of barbecue options and many visitors to our League tent on Hamilton Street! It's great to get out and about, meeting interested citizens and neighbors.

As part of our community outreach initiative members of the League have attended the 1st and 6th Ward Community Block Ambassador meetings as well as a meeting of the Franklin Park Community. We have been able to share information about how redistricting has affected portions of the City of Allentown and distribute resources related to voter registration and finding information for the fall election using www.vote411.org.

Upcoming events include a virtual program for the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living, a non-profit providing services and support to individuals with all kinds of disabilities. The presentation will focus on voting and election information, including how to research candidates. The League has also been invited to speak at the Adult Forum of St. John's UCC Church in Allentown on October 2nd. This program will focus on the coming general election, including voting options, finding accurate candidate information, and changes in representation due to redistricting.

The LWVPA and RAC-PA (Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism) are connecting local Leagues and congregations to partner in GOTV and voter education efforts. Postcards will be available in early September for distribution as part of this effort. Studies have shown postcard communications to be effective in motivating voters to make a plan to vote and follow-through with their plan. If you or a group you are a member of are willing to help address and send postcards, please call or email me. Get some friends together, share a few snacks, and help promote democracy!

Barbara Connolly, Community Outreach & Voter Services
email@lwvlehighcounty.org

Photos from the Blues, Brews & Barbecue Festival

Mary Erdman manning LWVLC Table

Michelle and Ron Graupner

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) task force met periodically throughout the summer. A special webinar which explored the issue of age bias was organized for August 22 and featured a panel made up of teenagers who have been active in the League. The teen panelists involved had set up chapters at their respective high schools and colleges. They shared tips on how the League can be more welcoming to younger members. It was suggested that Leagues look for issues which interest that demographic. For example, the environment is one topic that teens are passionate about.

Local Leagues often have difficulty gaining access to schools in order to dispense voter registration information. It was suggested that parent teacher organizations might be helpful in spreading the word to graduating seniors about the importance of voting. All the panelists had organized voter drives at their institutions. In addition, one panelist had organized monthly panel sessions where fellow students could have their voting questions answered by a faculty member. All the teen panelists emphasized that students are more likely to listen to people they trust.

The DEI task force will continue its monthly meetings through the coming league year.

Molly Faust , DEI Representative & Past President

Spotlight

Julie Ambrose, PhD

Julie Ambrose is a recent member of our League. She attends our Hot Topic Lunches (when her work schedule permits) and has signed on to be a member of our first ever book club. It was the advice of a friend who was active in an upstate New York league that propelled her to join the local league. One thing that Julie said she enjoys about being a member of the league is getting to know other like-minded people.

Julie is the executive director of the Allentown School District Foundation, a 501c3 organization, which raises money to supplement programs in the Allentown School District. It helps to support and provide infrastructure for programs such as artist residencies in the schools, school supply drives, volunteer literacy programs, and teacher innovation grants to name a few.

A native of Huntington, PA, Julie spent a year of high school in the Rotary Exchange program living with three host families in Belgium. She said it was a wonderful experience not being a tourist but really getting to know the country and the people. Julie has attended Pennsylvania colleges and her doctorate is in Administration and Leadership. Her dissertation title is: Purpose, Policy, Politics and Power: Analysis of the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program.

Julie has long been committed to civic participation. She feels that it is important to be involved. Julie and her husband have two sons and when they were in school, she became active with the PTA. She later ran for the Allentown School District School Board, was elected twice and served for a total of six years. Julie said she appreciated our Voters Guide and recognized the importance of responding when running for office. She currently volunteers as a poll worker.

Julie said she enjoys the outdoors - hiking and kayaking and walking. She and her sister enjoy quilting to commemorate family events.

Molly Faust

Margie Dunn

Our featured senior member for this issue is Margie Dunn. Margie was born in Philadelphia's Frankford section. She graduated from the University of West Virginia with a degree in Education. Later, Margie completed her graduate studies at Kutztown University, earning a master's degree in education.

Margie and her husband married and moved to Chesapeake, Virginia, near Virginia Beach, where they lived for 8 years. Margie taught high school while living in Virginia. After returning to the Lehigh Valley, she continued her teaching career in the Allentown School District, teaching at Trexler Middle School and at Allen High School. Margie retired from teaching in 2013, following 34 years as an educator. Presently, Margie is a substitute teacher in the Parkland School District.

The League of Women Voters was Margie's first experience with volunteering. Gayle Getz was a neighbor and she introduced Margie to the League by inviting her to an Annual Meeting in 1990. That meeting was attended by 125 members! Margie was impressed by the turnout, and by the members themselves and the organization's goals. One of her favorite League activities was interviewing candidates running for office on a PBS broadcast. Margie chairs the membership committee, which allows her to work from home and have lots of family time.

Congratulations to Margie and her husband- this December they will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary!

Donna Barker

The **Spotlight** feature is a new addition to The Voter. In each subsequent issue, we'd like to profile one of the members. As our membership grows, and as our face- to- face meetings go virtual, we'd like to keep in touch with one another through these brief interviews.

So, if you would like to nominate a League member to be "Spotlighted", or if you would like to be "Spotlighted" yourself, please let one of our Board members know.

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