

WE VOTER

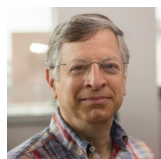
League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

Volume 26, No. 10

July-August 2020

2020 LWVUS CONVENTION

by Ron Bandes, Election Integrity Director, LWVGP



I attended my first LWVUS National Convention this year. It was a first time for them too, because they had never had their

meeting online before. They could have used some help from Judy Clack's candidate forum team in the use of this technology. But they returned the favor, because the caucus (session) that I liked best was the Candidate Forum session. I learned that some of what I thought were League rules actually are imposed by the Federal Elections Commission. And they provided a website, <https://www.lwvil.org/resources-for-leaders.html>, providing resources for forum leaders.

The caucus on MyLO, the software that powers the LWVGP website, gave a tour of the software, and showed many things that it can do. It was not a lesson, though. It gave you confidence that you could learn the software, but you still need to do so.

The caucus on Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Belonging needed Terrie Griffin on their panel. But I got two very short sentences with a lot of power in them from this caucus. The first directly applies to our work at LWVGP, "Diversity is democratic." The second is deeper still, "Equity addresses power disparities."

I hope LWVUS is able to hold the convention in person in 2022.

FROM THE LWVUS UPDATE, JULY 2, 2020

This past weekend I was honored to be [elected your national board president](#) for the next two

years. Having served on the LWVUS and LWVEF boards for the last four years, I know the great demands of this role. I also know that the work we have been doing has prepared us for the challenges ahead. I look forward to working in partnership over the coming biennium as we continue to empower voters and defend democracy.

I always enjoy League Conventions, and this year was no exception. Holding the meeting virtually allowed more League members than ever to attend and observe the festivities. I was impressed by the many VIPs and members of Congress who shared congratulatory videos, an inspiring [keynote address from CBS News anchor Norah O'Donnell](#), powerful remarks from our [CEO Virginia Kase](#), and impressive programs and work showcased in [the League Convention award winners](#). This newsletter includes more [Convention highlights](#) that I encourage you to read, view, and share. And if you get the chance, thank our amazing staff. They worked extraordinarily hard over the last few months, adjusting to the 'new normal' and pulling off a successful convention in the middle of a global pandemic.

I closed Convention with [my remarks](#), in which I outlined some of my vision for the next biennium, including making VOTE411 a household name, deepening our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work, and truly becoming an intergenerational enterprise.

I am excited about sharing League building time with you virtually soon and eventually in person during the upcoming biennium. I look forward to celebrating in person with so many of you when we meet in Denver for our 2022 Convention.

This weekend, I'm sure many of you will be finding ways to celebrate our nation's birthday that might be more low-key than years past. Wherever you are this 4th of July, I wish you a happy holiday. So be safe, stay healthy, and wear masks!

Deborah Ann Turney, MP, JD

In League,
Deborah



CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

IT'S SUMMER!



For many of us, summertime has often meant vacation, travel and much-needed downtime. Not so this summer. Trips to the beach or mountains or to visit far-away friends and relatives have fallen victim to the realities of Covid-19.

We've all had to rethink how we stay in touch with one another, how we do our daily business whether it's that trip to the grocery store or how and where to get your hair cut!

LWVGP has also had to make some adjustments – like conducting our monthly Board meetings and Candidate Forums via teleconference. We had a terrific Annual Meeting using Zoom as well – conducting all our voting and discussion using the “Chat Room.” If you haven't already done so, please take a look at the Annual Workbook where all the hard work done by various League Committees is summarized in very comprehensive and interesting reports.

Some of us managed to “attend” the National Convention through the wonders of Zoom as well. It was my first Convention and I was impressed by how engaging, knowledgeable and impressive the presenters were. We learned a lot of useful ideas about things we can adopt in our own area.

Covid-19 also meant changes in how we vote. For the June 2nd Primary, Allegheny County voters took advantage of the vote-by-mail option with fully 2/3 of those who voted using that option. Polling locations

were consolidated in the county creating some confusion and long lines in certain places. Although there were some glitches, voting went surprising well. League Members have already made suggestions to the Election Department for improvements.

League Members are also hard at work looking for new ways to register voters and educate them about their rights and responsibilities as we move toward the Presidential Election in November. We'll be working with high schools and local colleges and universities to bring them digital, video and social media tools that will provide them with all the same information we used to provide in face-to-face meetings.

Candidate forums will be in great demand before November and because of early mail-in voting, we'll have to do them earlier than we have in the past. Many of us spent a good part of the Primary season learning how to conduct meaningful forums using our computers and it worked! We got lots of viewers watching those recorded sessions on our Facebook page.

This is going to be a challenging year for all of us and for me in my new role as Co-President. During this 100th Anniversary year, we've educated ourselves, adapted to new realities and adopted 21st century skills to continue the all-important mission of the League – Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy. Here's to the next 100!

Maureen Grosheider

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New Legislative Interview Coordinator Needed

Once a year the State league asks us to arrange interviews with Allegheny County state legislators for the following purposes:

- To learn where legislators stand on specific issues so the League can be a better advocate on our positions.
- To help Leagues build a relationship with their legislators.

This task lasts for about a month or so from early December to early January, done mostly online/by phone, mainly, from a list of all legislators. You find a league member or two to interview each one. Each member then turns in the answers to the State League via email. Please contact current coordinator Judy Donohue for more information at jirdono71@gmail.com.

LWVGP Officers / Executive Committee		Local Area Meeting Chairs	
Co-President	Maureen Mamula	Pgh. Central 412-477-7572	Martha Raak
Co-President	Maureen Grosheider	North Hills 412-364-7329	Nancy Mott
V.P.1 Development, Gun safety	Nancy Naragon	South Hills 412-760-9642	Maureen Mamula
V.P.2 Program	Christina Beuger		
Secretary	Heather Wechter	Interest & Service Area Specialists	
Treasurer, Funding, Gun Safety	Preston Shimer	PR, Communications, Blast	Eileen Olmsted
		Housing	Adelaide Smith
		Death Penalty	Hazel Cope
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Election Security, Voting Mach.	Ron Bandes	City / Cty & Judicial Reform	Nina Helbling
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Membership, Naturalization	Judy Diorio	National / State Program	Carol Walton
Evening meetings	Emily Ferri	VOTER Editor	Sue Broughton
Education	Joan Franklin	Health, Water	Shirley McIlvried
Voter Service	Terrie Griffin	Civic Salon	Briana Horan
Civic Education	Amy Kleissias	Gov. relations, Outreach	Jackie Dixon
Program, Debates, Vote411	Annette Shimer	Legis. Interviews, Book Club	Judy Donohue
		Website	Kathleen Farrington
Staff			
Community Information Center	Manager: Barbara Simpson	Marcellus Shale Grant	Manager: Heather Harr
League Phone Numbers, Websites, and Social Media			
Greater Pittsburgh	412-261-4284	lwvpgh.org	
Pennsylvania	717-234-1576	palwv.org	
National	202-429-1965	lwv.org	
Facebook	www.facebook.com	Search: League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh	

VOTE BY MAIL – I'm convinced it's the way to go!

by Hazel Cope (recently moved to Colorado)



Yesterday was Primary Election Day in Colorado. Today we learned the results!

Vote by Mail, which began here in 2014, really works. When we changed our driving license registrations from PA to CO (our new State) and showed our US passports, we were registered to vote automatically, and a couple of weeks ago we each received our ballot form in the mail. We could have mailed them back, but we chose to deposit them in one of the many special ballot boxes around the State. It didn't even cost us stamps!

The ballot counting began before Election Day, turnout was high, and if you preferred to vote in person you could do so (about 6% did.) It apparently didn't favor one party over the other. PA's elimination of requiring an excuse for applying for an absentee ballot was a great step forward, but this seems even better.

Standing Meetings

Board Meetings

- ✓ **Second** Monday of the month. Lunch at 11:30 a.m., at Einstein Bagels in the Koppers Building. Meeting: 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. in the LWVGP CIC (office) conference room at 436 Seventh Ave., Suite 350

Local Area Unit Meetings

- ✓ **Pittsburgh Central:** 2nd Friday, 1:30 p.m. at the Squirrel Hill Public Library, 5801 Forbes Ave., Pgh. PA 15217. Contact Martha Raak at 412-802-7266 or marbiker1@gmail.com
- ✓ **North Hills:** 3rd Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. at St Paul's Methodist Church at 1965 Ferguson Road in Hampton. Contact Shirley McIlvried at 412-364-7329 or howardmciii@comcast.net
- ✓ **South Hills:** 1st Thursday, 12:30 p.m. at the Mt. Lebanon Public Library, 16 Castle Shannon Blvd., Pgh, PA 15228 (unless otherwise announced). Contact Maureen Mamula at 412-760-9642 or mamula159@hotmail.com

Other Ongoing Meetings

- ✓ **Education Committee**
4th Wednesday, 1 pm. Contact Joan Franklin at 412-422-7909, fjoan1960@gmail.com or Phyllis Dreyfuss, 412-808-6028, lpdrey@verizon.net.
- ✓ **Voter Service Committee**
1st Tuesday, 12:30 pm. Contact Judy Clack at 512-731-0280 or jblclack@yahoo.com.
- ✓ **Gun Safety Committee**
Dates TBD. Contact Nancy Naragon at 412-366-2446 or nancynaragon@msn.com
- ✓ **Non-fiction Book Club**
3rd Friday, 10:15 am. Contact Phyllis Dreyfuss, 412-808-6028 or lpdrey@verizon.net

SUMMER CALENDAR

July

21 Tue	Voter Service Committee 12:30-2:30pm by videoconference
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August

04 Tue	Voter Service Committee 12:30-2:30pm by videoconference
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10 Mon	Board meeting by Zoom
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18 Tue	Voter Service Committee 12:30-2:30pm by videoconference
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1 Sept	Voter Service Committee 12:30-2:30pm by videoconference
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NON-FICTION BOOK CLUB By Phyllis Dreyfuss

The League of Women Voter's Non-fiction Book club met for a Zoom meeting at the beginning of June. We discussed many of the books and articles that we have all been reading during the shut down. Two books that seemed to get the most attention are in depth analysis of their subjects and will undoubtedly leave the reader's head swirling. The first, titled "*Kochland: The Secret History of Koch industries and Corporate Power in America.*" What Kochland, the new book from Christopher Leonard, adds to the story is not so much an account of the ways in which the brothers spend their money, but rather, a richly reported tale of how they make it — the inner workings of one of the nation's largest private corporations. To be sure, the Koch brothers aren't entirely self-made. They got a sizable head start from their father. Fred Koch, a co-founder of the far-right John Birch Society, assembled his own mini-empire of ranches, factories and oil pipelines. But Charles and David Koch supersized this fortune. They added a Minnesota refinery that was well-positioned to turn cheap, Canadian crude oil into pricey gasoline for the fuel-thirsty Midwest. Over time, they expanded into fertilizer, paper products, options trading and more. This is a book that expands on the book we all liked, Jane Maher's *Dark Money*.

The other book is titled *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*. This book is written with incredible detailed research (maybe more than one needs or wants) but gives the reader a clear picture of the broad history and influence on American culture and politics. The evangelical movement began in the revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries, known in America as the Great Awakenings. A populist rebellion against the established churches, it became the dominant religious force in the country. Evangelicals have, in many ways, defined the nation. They have shaped our culture and our politics. Frances FitzGerald's narrative of this distinctively American movement is a major work of history, piecing together the centuries-long story for the first time. Evangelicals now constitute 25 percent of the American population, but they are no longer monolithic in their politics. They range from Tea Party supporters to social reformers.

In July 17th we each chose a book that discusses the issue of racism in this country. The book club will not meet in August, but will resume in September. If you would like to join us, please let me know. lpdrey@verizon.net

EDUCATION ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORT Joan Franklin, Phyllis Dreyfus, Co-chairs

Despite not meeting for several months, some members of our committee have contacted many elected officials and members of Boards of Education to enlist their support for Governor Wolf's reforms. We are asking them to actively support the Governor's reform proposals to 1. increase and stabilize funding for Basic Education (please note the disparity of funding among school districts), and 2. continue to examine Charter Schools and Cyber Schools in order to shed light on their budgets, their student profiles, and their graduation rates (please note that charter school costs drain millions from public school budgets.)

Over many years the League of Women Voters at local, state, and federal levels has advocated for the importance of public education in a democracy. We are aware of the existing inequality among districts with enormous differences in local revenue. Furthermore, students in underfunded school districts have been hit the hardest by the transition to remote learning because their districts lacked the most basic resources before the school closures. Allocating federal COVID-19 relief funding through the bipartisan Basic Education Funding formula would have ensured that school districts would have received funding proportionate to the needs of their students. The formula as it currently stands does not achieve that goal.

As a national organization with years of support for public education, we have urged all recipients of our communications to recognize that there is nothing more important in our society than the education of our children.

ACTION: PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS AND YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD EXPRESSING YOUR CONCERN FOR THE INFLATED COST OF CHARTER SCHOOLS (ESPECIALLY CYBER SCHOOLS) AT THE SAME TIME THAT LOCAL DISTRICTS BUDGETS ARE ALREADY EXPERIENCING THE GREATEST BUDGET PRESSURE FROM DECREASED SUPPORT AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT. WE NEED ALSO TO ENACT GOVERNOR WOLF'S PROPOSALS FOR CHARTER SCHOOL REFORM TO INCREASE ACCURACY IN FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY.

NEW MEMBERS

South Hills:

Sarah Cranganu
Sarah.cranganu@gmail.com

Jennifer DZouza
jasuther@hotmail.com

Roberta Hartman
household with Tom Hartman
Hartman1967@verizon.net

Karen Lightell
karenlightell@gmail.com

North Hills:

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Juliette Knightley
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Kathy Nagle
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Sandra Woolley
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HIGH SCHOOL VOTER OUTREACH: JULY-AUGUST 2020 PLANS FOR 2020-2021 Amy Kleissas, Chair

We have made some assumptions about the last half of 2020 and winter/spring of 2021 as we plan for youth voters outreach and civic education.

At this time, we believe that:

1. Schools may not reopen or may reopen on a limited basis and/or with some virtual (online) component.
2. For the next year, schools may not welcome in-person volunteers. CDC guidelines must be considered and balanced with the safety of LWVGP volunteers.
3. Some or many underserved students do not have access, or are not reached effectively with technology.
4. In accessing information, young people are not as likely to read (in the summer or anytime) as they are to use their preferred social media such as; SMS texting, Instagram and Tik Tok, not Facebook or email. (Source: When We All Vote)



We are currently finalizing our plan for both summer and for fall 2020. We are also finalizing our plan to resume virtual, or eventually, in-person classroom visits in winter and spring 2021.

Plan for Summer 2020

During June, our committee has worked on completing short tutorials which target eligible youth and all registered voters.

Informed Young and New Voter Series includes:

1. Why Vote (targets underserved and all eligible young people)
2. Voter Registration (helpful for anyone who wishes to register)
3. Understanding Elections (targets underserved, all eligible youth and anyone who wants to understand more about elections)
4. Voting by Mail (helpful for every registered voter)

These four tutorials will be posted on the LWVGP Website Homepage by mid-July. There will be an intense effort to disseminate the PDFs to: communities of color, adults through email and on social media like Facebook who may forward the information to the young people in their lives (all Key Volunteers, and all LWVGP members through the Blast, VOTER and Communicator), to all Allegheny County high school, colleges, and university, and other community contacts.

Plan for Fall 2020

Plans for fall and winter are being finalized. We will network with teachers asking for feedback about the best way to proceed. As there is so much uncertainty, we will try to accommodate high schools with whom we have established relationships with the information they want at the time they want it. This may look like teachers sending the tutorial PDFs to their students in the fall and holding off scheduling virtual or in-person visits for winter and spring 2021.

Continued next page

In the meantime, we will:

- Create a new (Virtual) Classroom Lesson entitled, “[Voting Made Easier 2.](#)”
- Pilot program with Presenters as virtual guides to Voting Made Easier 2 through Zoom.
- Create a “[Guidebook for Young or New Voters](#)” using key slides from four tutorials or new Voting Made Easier 2.
- Network with the goal of distributing “Guidebook” to every Pittsburgh Public Schools senior.
- Train presenters to conduct virtual lessons.
- Schedule as many high school virtual visits as possible, probably beginning in winter and throughout 2121.
- Copy as many “Guidebooks” as needed for PPS and scheduled high school visits. (10K grant received from Heinz Endowments, thanks to Emily Ferri’s efforts!)
- Revise, supplement and copy Teacher Resource folders.
- Disseminate 2020 Facts for Citizens in the fall to interested high schools. (PPS already has 2020 Facts for Citizens for seniors and for other classes.)

Other Actions Under Discussion:

Because INSPIREPA has dissolved, we have lost them as a partner. For the past three years, we distributed their [pledge cards](#) to students, and they followed up with reminder texts to new voters before all elections. This is a crucial part of feedback for grants. We need to figure out a way to accomplish this task, if possible. It might involve using the LWVUS pledge card, maintaining a website and texting new registered voters before elections, or finding a new partner.

We also need to gather data for grants on the effectiveness of our program. One solution could be [our own Voter Registration portal \(PA OVR WebApi\)](#). We need a way to estimate the cost of software development and maintenance of this portal. It would provide us with the number of voter registrations completed through all Voter Service efforts.

[If anyone has the skill set or desire to help with either of these two actions or would just like to be more involved in our High School Voter Outreach effort, we welcome your commitment! Please email me at \[civic.education@lwvpgh.org\]\(mailto:civic.education@lwvpgh.org\) or call me at 412.600.2581\(cell \) or 412.787.7925 \(landline\).](#)



VOTER SERVICE

by Judy Clack, Voter Service Chair



Heinz Endowments Grant

The Heinz Endowments awarded a grant of \$10,000 to the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh in support of our voter service activities. Many thanks are due to **Emily Ferri** who authored our grant application. The LWVGP must meet three main objectives:

(1) Create and disseminate new online, digital lesson plans and educational materials for teachers and community leaders to inform students and county residents about the voting process in a non-partisan manner.

(2) Host eight to ten candidate forums in advance of the November general election. Reach 3,000 to 4,000 viewers, with the goal of increasing voter turnout and interest in local and state races.

(3) Develop new online and printed voter education materials that publicize Act 77's election law changes, encourage mail-in voting for community health, and partner with organizations such as food banks, government offices and agencies to ensure that online and printed voter guides are reaching voters even in the midst of the public health crisis.

Join Zoom Voter Service Meetings

Thirty-two LWVGP members attended the July 7 Zoom meeting of the Voter Service committee – a record! It is heartwarming that so many League members are interested. There's room for more! Email Judy Clack, jbclack@yahoo.com, to go on the member mailing list and receive Zoom invitations and agendas. Upcoming meetings are scheduled via Zoom (by video or by phone) from 12:30 – 2:30 pm on these dates: Tues. July 21, Tues. Aug. 4, Tues. Aug. 18, and Tues. Sept. 1. Attend whenever you can.

Due to the coronavirus, all LWV voter registration and outreach has to change to protect the health of our members. Many subcommittees have formed to tackle how to reach these populations to inform them about voter registration and mail-in ballot applications: food banks and food pantries, senior citizen housing units, libraries, minority populations, churches/synagogues/mosques, low income and underserved populations, colleges and universities, realtors and businesses.

We have begun to develop written materials to distribute to these populations. We also need to create brief videos that would provide the same information. We need more people who have had experience making videos. Let me know if you can help with video projects. Another subcommittee wants to recruit more people to work at the polls and to collaborate with the County on improving the whole voting process. If you are interested in joining a particular group, let me know (jbclack@yahoo.com) and I'll put you in touch with the sub-committee chair.

Naturalization

From mid-March through May, naturalization ceremonies were canceled due to the coronavirus. Since June 5, small ceremonies have restarted but only the naturalization candidates can attend. No guests, including LWV members or family, are allowed at both the Federal Courthouse and the USCIS site at Penn Center. With the cooperation of the administrator at both sites, voter registrations forms, LWV line-by-line instructions, and LWV *Facts for Citizens* are being distributed to the new citizens.

In person voter registration events have been canceled since March 12. There may be a few public, outdoor events at which we can safely register participants like the Juneteenth Celebration on Saturday, August 29 at Point State Park.

Mt. Lebanon Magazine has published a wonderful article
"Mary Larsen: The Velvet Hammer"

You can find it at <https://lebomag.com/mary-larsen-the-velvet-hammer/>

CIVIC STAR AWARD—2020 as presented by Nancy Naragon at Annual Meeting

Our Founding Fathers enshrined a new type of government in the words of our Constitution—one where citizens would govern themselves rather than having a king or ruler do it for them. It was a great and visionary experiment and history has shown us that it has sometimes been more successful than at other times.

That Constitutional framework, however brilliant it may be, did have some weaknesses. One was the lack of input from women, half the citizenry. The weakness was remedied in 1920 when women won the right to vote after years of valiant effort, including demonstrations, marches, letters, lobbying, and even going to jail.

Once the vote was obtained, the former suffragists joined together to form a national League of Women Voters to ensure that the newly enfranchised women would be voting from informed and thoughtful positions. That same year, a League of Women Voters was established here in Allegheny County, so this year we celebrate 100 years both nationally and locally.

Throughout its history League members have valued and embraced the Constitutional concept of a democratic republic and have worked to be part of that visionary implementation.

That's why League members promote citizen participation in government—registering, voting, working on campaigns, running for office, communicating and working with elected officials. It's why we study and try to understand public issues and share our knowledge with other citizens. It's why we promote elections and try to ensure they're fair and accessible.

League members are involved in these processes to some extent, but at times there are certain individuals who contribute extraordinary time, effort and creativity toward fostering the League's mission and accomplishing our goals. It is to highlight such efforts and to thank these special people that the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh created the **Civic Star Award**—our own contribution to that visionary implementation.

This year's awardee is ***Eileen Olmsted***.

Eileen puts hours of hard work into numerous League activities every week throughout the year. She supports the League across a wide spectrum of interests and projects, from serving on the Board of Directors in practically every position from president to committee chair, marching in parades and demonstrations, representing the League at meetings, conventions, and panels too numerous to mention, and hosting various meetings and parties at her house. She also worked with other League members to establish a link with younger voters through the Civic Salon.

Having spent time in Colombia as a child, Eileen speaks fluent Spanish. She created a civic education presentation for Bhutanese immigrants who were studying to become citizens and led efforts to translate LWVGP voting documents into six languages. She initiated the effort that led to the League's very successful presentation for high school students on voting and civic participation and was able to hand it off to a very committed committee.

Eileen came to us from California, where she had been involved in their League's electronic voters guide project, Smart Voter. She was invaluable to us as we moved into and out of that program and eventually into Vote411. Eileen has always been active in Voter Service activities, serving on the committee, contributing to the Voters Guide development and implementation online, and serving frequently as a moderator at candidate forums.

Eileen appreciates the value of robust communication processes to support League activities and has worked tirelessly to ensure that LWVGP's weekly *Blast* is published on time and full of valuable information. She planned our League 90th birthday party and the 2015 State Convention held here in Pittsburgh. Currently, she is also serving as Communications Director for LWVPA. On the national level, Eileen is a Ruth Shur Fellow, a National Coach for LWVUS in which she mentors Leagues across the country.

Eileen is one of those pillars that the League relies on to maintain the League's respected position in our political life, always there with a smile and an offer to help out. She epitomizes this award—and now we learn she is retiring from the Board of LWVGP—there will be a big hole, and we will miss her.

So, we thank Eileen sincerely for her years of devotion to promoting a strong democracy and robust civic participation through the League of Women Voters—and look forward to her continued activities now as an off-board member.

Congratulations!



The following article from Terrie Griffin arrived too late for the June issue, but it's too good to pass up, so here it is in July.

Terrie says: Most of you may be aware I relocated from Virginia to Pittsburgh where I was an active League member. I'm still on their mailing list. I was elated when I received this wonderful article on Juneteenth which is a day of celebration in the African American community. I share this with the hope we can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of this celebration.



Happy Juneteenth!

The League of Women Voters of Virginia formally celebrates and acknowledges June 19th as Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, or Emancipation Day-- the oldest-known annual celebration of the ending of slavery in the United States. The holiday commemorates June 19, 1865, when the news finally reached African Americans in Gavelston, Texas that President Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves living in Confederate states two years earlier. When Union soldiers arrived in Galveston to bring the news that slavery had been abolished, former slaves celebrated, and thus Juneteenth was born.

Earlier this week, Governor Ralph Northam proposed making Juneteenth an official state holiday beginning this year. We acknowledge our state's confederate history and current climate of systemic injustice and discrimination. It is therefore vital we elevate awareness of this important piece of African American history as we continue to come to terms with the senseless murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and the countless other black lives lost to anti-blackness and racial violence in America.

As we pay tribute today, we acknowledge the many roles and contributions of the African American spirit to the League and generally to our society, the countless supporters, organizers, and attendees of Juneteenth celebrations hosted all across this nation and beyond. You are writing the history of our country and our world – there can be no greater honor than that. We thank you.

As an organization whose mission is to empower voters, encourage political responsibility and defend democracy, we stand in solidarity with Black communities. and support protesters across our country who are currently fighting for widespread police reform in response to the pandemic of disproportionate police brutality on black and brown communities. We stand behind the demand for increased funding of healthcare, education, and housing in such communities. The League will show our solidarity, not only by speaking out against racism in all forms, but by doing the work and advocacy required of us to be anti-racist.

Today is a day for celebration, education, and correction. We will take it as such, and ask all members to do the same. Sensitized to the conditions and experiences of others, only then can we begin to effect significant and lasting improvements in our society. Examine how you can be an ally on this day. The voting rights advocacy community must not stay silent in the face of systemic injustice. We must act and speak in solidarity with the Black community and the movement for Black Lives. Fighting for an educated, just future for all Americans includes speaking up for a just, nondiscriminatory, participatory democracy without system race-based outcomes and violence. Being silent is not an option. Black lives matter today, and every day.

Happy Juneteenth.

We thank Amir Methvin, LWV-VA intern and member, for her invaluable contribution in writing this statement.

Marvelous Members Wise Women (and Men) of the League

by Amy Kleissas

There couldn't be a better League member to interview this month than Sue Broughton, our VOTER editor. My questions, but all her own words. Thank you, Sue, for your wise words!

1. Would you describe your early years?

I was born in Boston, Massachusetts and went to Newton High School. My family was one of the only two Jewish families in my neighborhood. I was sort of a nerd, before that term existed – I liked math and physics when that was not usual for a girl, but my father encouraged those interests. My father had built a darkroom into the house he designed, and I became interested in photography. I took pictures at high school football games from the sidelines on Friday, developed and printed them over the weekend, and delivered them for the school newspaper Monday morning.

2. Tell us about your educational background; who was your favorite teacher and who inspired you?

I graduated in 1958 from Bryn Mawr College with a major in physics. There were many excellent professors there, but three stand out. Rosalie Hoyt was one of the few women in the physics then and a pioneer in the field of biophysics. Walter and Agnes Michels – a power couple for sure – were respectively chair of the physics department and chair of the Classics Department. Her course on the Bible as literature was one of the most thought-provoking I took there. I went on to obtain a Master's degree in physics from Brandeis University.

3. What is your professional or work history?

I didn't quite finish the work for the Master's degree in a year. While I was finishing, I took a job working on an early stage of the space program. I then received the degree, got married, and moved to Harrisburg PA. I taught college physics at Dickinson College in Carlisle for two years and did some research for AMP Inc. for another two years. When we moved to Pittsburgh, I taught physics at Point Park (then a Junior College) and eventually quit to concentrate on being a mother to my two children.

I had to return to work when my husband died in 1977 at the age of 42. Finding nothing in my field, I took jobs in technical writing for computer software, which I have found to be a very satisfying second career where I learned many of the skills that I now use on projects such as The Voter.

4. Why and when did the League become important to you?

I joined the League in 1971 after I was invited to attend a meeting by a friend who was involved in the environmental movement as was I. The League was also very involved in environmental issues, so League fit with my interests.

5. Who was a notable or first League mentor to you?

Probably the most influential was Joan Schoff. There had been seven local Leagues in Allegheny County. By the late 1980's, two had disbanded, and the LWV North Hills was down to a small number of members. She and I worked together to rebuild the League in the North Hills.

6. What was your League "portfolio," including offices you held?

I started out doing largely environmental issues, particularly land use on which I wrote a section of a major LWVPA publication during the four years I served on the LWVPA board. I was president of both the LWV North Hills and LWVGP. I helped to establish the League's concern about voting machines. I worked on all three of the LWVUS attempts at establishing an online voter guide: DNet, Smart Voter and Vote411. I have done moderator training and served as moderator for many candidate forums.

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7. What do you feel are the most important things you accomplished for the League (and our democracy)?

1. Helping the League to get online: Voter Guide, website, Facebook page.
2. Helping the League to show that there is no such thing as a “women’s issue,” because all issues affect and concern women.

8. What are your concerns and/or hopes for a post-pandemic America?

COVID-19 is a dress rehearsal for climate change. We must learn to change many of our ways of using energy and resources to leave a livable world for the next generations.

9. What are your wise words for the rest of us?

“You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.” Rabbi Tarfon in “Ethics of Our Fathers” (Pirkei Avot), part of the Mishna portion of the Talmud.

Fair Districts PA has run out of time to get an amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution for legislative redistricting. But they have not given up on advocating for a fairer system. This is Plan B.

Sue Broughton

SUMMARY:

LEGISLATIVE AND CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING ACT

The proposed Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act (LACRA) retains and builds upon Pennsylvania’s existing redistricting systems: Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC) for legislative redistricting and passage of legislation for congressional redistricting. LACRA introduces greater transparency into both redistricting processes and establishes clear, measurable map-drawing criteria designed to prevent extreme partisan gerrymandering and promote accountability to voters.

Key process reforms include the following:

1. Multiple statewide public hearings would be required both before and after preliminary redistricting plans are approved. Hearings on congressional redistricting would be held by Senate and House State Government Committees and could be held jointly.
2. All meetings would be subject to the Open Meetings Law and all hearings would be live-streamed with accommodations for multiple languages and convenient times for the public.
3. A user-friendly website for dissemination of data, proposed maps and analyses, public comments and other information free of charge to the public.
4. Any Pennsylvania resident could submit a redistricting map covering any or all districts or parts of districts. Citizen maps would be available on the public website and be given consideration equal to formal testimony presented at public hearings.

LACRA will also impose clear, measurable mapping criteria, including:

1. Existing PA Constitution requirements for compactness, contiguity and prohibited division of political subdivisions “unless absolutely necessary” would apply to both legislative and congressional redistricting.
2. Additional limits on splitting counties beyond what is required by population and a prohibition against dividing voting precincts.
3. Protection of racial and language minorities against discrimination in the mapping process.
4. A prohibition against gerrymandering designed to protect incumbents or to unfairly discriminate against political parties.
5. Keeping communities of interest intact and being responsive to voter preferences.