

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

THE VOTER

Volume 26, No. 6

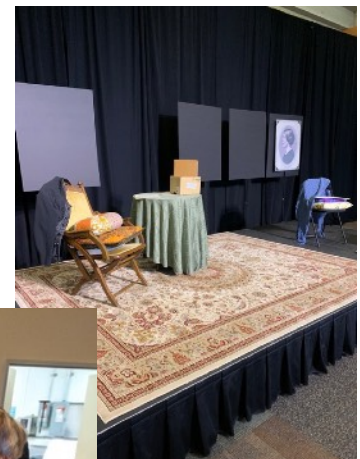
March 2020

MARCH UNIT PROGRAMS

South and Central Units: Election Laws/Voting Machines with Ron Bandes

North Unit: Recycling program that was cancelled last fall

Celebrating our 100th



Eileen Olmsted, Michelle Zmijanac, Martha Raak, Carol Emerson, Cris Beuger, Norma Farquhar, Barb Grover.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH IS CELEBRATED IN MARCH, AND WE HAVE A LOT OF CELEBRATING TO DO!



100 years of Women Voting this year! We have already started to celebrate. The event we did with the Heinz History Center in February was wonderful. Thanks to Cris Beuger, who led the partnership with the History Center, and to all the members who helped with the event.

The Post Gazette wrote a story and included photos from the event.

Proclamations to celebrate the 100 years and the League of Women Voters have been issued by several levels of government in the area already, and we have been informed of others in the works. Once we have all of them in the office, we will make them available for viewing.

The Women's Hall of Achievement will be honoring the League at a luncheon on March 21st at LeMont, 1114 Grandview Ave on Mt. Washington. Details will be in the Blast, along with a link to sign up for the luncheon.

New voting equipment will be rolled out for the primary on April 28th. If you work at the polls, the County has scheduled over 30 classes for poll workers to attend to see the new system, and to learn the procedures to use the new system.

Lots of changes to mail-in ballots – both absentee and the new mail-in ballot option. Other changes also

to the last day to register before an election, and to the straight party option. You can check them out at www.votespa.com and read about them in the article by Ron Bandes on page 5.

Please help those who may need some help – perhaps a younger person who has not voted yet, or someone who wants to vote but perhaps should consider the absentee or mail-in ballot due to medical, work or other issues.

Remember too our Voters Guide – www.Vote411.org – a great help for ALL voters. It is a wonderful aid for voters, since the information comes from the candidate, and it is available online as well as a print distribution through the Pittsburgh Courier and a limited distribution to the libraries in Allegheny County.

I have been looking at old newspapers on the internet, and saw many articles in 1920 about the female vote. There was even an article about some communities offering classes to women on how to review and mark a ballot or use a machine to vote! How times have changed. Now the members of the League help voters with information about candidates and new procedures.

Remember to mark April 28th on your calendar, and to tell family and friends to mark it on their calendars too!

Maureen Mamula

In Memoriam, Phyllis Armstrong

On November 30, 2019, the League of Women Voters lost a devoted friend, member and contributor—Phyllis Armstrong. Through the years Phyllis showed her commitment to the League by serving as a board member, president of LWV Allegheny County Council (before the merger of local leagues that formed LWVGP) and state board member. Then she shared the position of office manager until her retirement at age eighty. Phyllis continued to support the League with her time and financially. She was especially instrumental in funding publication of *Facts for Citizens*. Her strong spirit, sharp intelligence and passion for women's and civil rights will be remembered by all who knew her.

Dorothy Wriedt

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The League is a nonpartisan organization whose purpose is to encourage the informed participation of citizens in government and to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

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Proclamations honoring the League's 100th birthday. Left photo: Accepting the proclamation from Pittsburgh City Council declaring February 11, 2020 "League of Women Voters Day." Right photo: Terrie Griffin accepting the proclamation from Allegheny County Council sponsored by Councilwoman Cindy Kirk (at far right of the photo), February 25, 2020.

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, joan1960@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 jbclack@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

MARCH-APRIL CALENDAR

Voter registration events in high schools and housing for aged-out foster youth that are part of the Civic Education Project chaired by Amy Kleissas are not listed here. Please see Amy's article on pages 7 & 8 for these dates.

March

03 Tue	Voter Service Committee, 12:30 pm, CIC office
03 Tue	Public Board of Elections Meeting: Update on status of elections preparations, Allegheny County Courthouse Conf. Rm 1, 1 st Fl. 3 pm
05 Thur	South Hills Unit Meeting – Program: Election Laws
07 Sat	Voter Registration, Cooper Siegel Library, 403 Fox Chapel Rd., 15238
09 Mon	Board Meeting
13 Fri	Pittsburgh Central Meeting – Program: Election Laws
17 Tue	North Hills Unit Meeting – Program: Recycling
20 Fri	Naturalization & voter registration, Federal Courthouse, 9:00 am
20 Fri	Non-Fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 am
21 Sat	Women's Hall of Achievement to honor the 100th Anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment
25 Wed	Naturalization & Voter Reg., U.S.C.I.S. Penn Center, 12:30, 2:15 pm
25 Wed	Education Advocacy Com. Meeting, Squirrel Hill Library, 1:00 pm

April

02 Thur	South Hills Unit Meeting
07 Tue	Voter Service Committee, 12:30 pm, CIC office
10 Fri	Pittsburgh Central Meeting
13 Mon	Board Meeting
17 Fri	Naturalization & voter registration, Federal Courthouse, 9:00 am
17 Fri	Non-Fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 am
21 Tue	North Hills Unit Meeting
22 Wed	Education Advocacy Com. Meeting, Squirrel Hill Library, 1:00 pm
28 Tue	Primary Election Day, 7:00 am - 8:00 pm

First revision to PA Election Code since 1937 by Ron Bandes

The PA General Assembly and Governor Wolf passed the first major revision to the election code since 1937. There are changes for voters, candidates, and election administrators.



For voters, there are three highly visible changes. First, citizens have more time to register to become voters (and for voters to change their registration). The old law said you had to postmark your mail-in registration application or hand in your application by 30 days before the next election (it was really 29 days since 30 days before a Tuesday is always a Sunday). The revised law gives a voter until 15 days before an election to get an application into the hands of the Elections Division, but postmarks are no longer considered. So, for applicants using mail, the deadline moved less than two weeks.

The second change for voters is an additional method of voting for those who can't or won't appear in person at their polling place on Election Day. Voters who do not qualify for an absentee ballot (out of the municipality, ill, have a disability, religious observance, or official Election Day duties) may apply for a Mail-In Ballot. The new mail-in ballot requires no reason. Both absentee and mail-in voters may submit applications for permanent status to receive ballots for all elections for the year, and to receive renewal applications automatically each subsequent year. The deadline to apply for these two types of ballots is the same as it was for absentee ballots: one week before the election—but don't wait that long! If using mail, you'll need more time for three mailings (i.e., application, blank ballot, voted ballot). The deadline for the Elections Division to receive your ballot has been extended to 8:00 PM on Election Day. But don't bring your ballot to the polling place! The ballot must be received at the Elections Division office (or a satellite location, if any, which can only be located outside the City of Pittsburgh); pollworkers will not deliver it for you.

Pennsylvania seems to have given little consideration to either the details of implementing no-excuse mail-in ballots or to the security considerations of such a ballot. Mail-in ballots mean unsupervised voting. We have allowed unsupervised voting for people with an acceptable excuse so that they wouldn't be otherwise disenfranchised. But unsupervised voting for everyone increases the risk of bribery and coercion for voters that don't need to take that risk. Coercion doesn't have to come from a thug; it could be a domineering spouse, employer, or circle of friends who could "help" you fill out your ballot.

The third change for voters is the disappearance of the straight-party shortcut on ballots for November or special elections. You can still vote a straight-party ticket. You just have no shortcut to do it; you must mark all the candidates of the party to do so now. Straight-party shortcuts didn't make choices for ballot questions such as new taxes (e.g., library or parks), new laws (like Marsy's Law), or retention of judges upon completion of a ten-year term. Maybe these questions will get more attention now.

Candidates now have a little easier time circulating and filing nomination petitions and nomination papers. Some restrictions on who could be a circulator have been eased, and notarization is no longer required.

The county must keep records of the dates that absentee/mail-in ballots are applied for, approved, delivered, and received completed. There are a few other changes for election administrators.

Look to the League for reliable information about election administration, candidates, and issues.

VOTER SERVICE by Judy Clack, Voter Service Chair



Thank you to the many LWVGP members who have volunteered for voter registration opportunities. In February, 13 events were staffed. In March, 18 events are scheduled to date, with more possible. The LWVGP has been covering high schools, universities, naturalization ceremonies and community requests. If you would like to be added to the list of those notified of voter registration opportunities, contact Judy Clack, jbcclack@yahoo.com.

From late-March through mid-April, LWVGP will be conducting candidate forums for as many contested primary races as possible. All U.S. Congressional Representatives are up for election this year along with all Pennsylvania legislative seats and some PA senate seats. About ten League members are needed for a variety of roles at each candidate forum. Notify Judy Clack, jbcclack@yahoo.com, if you would be interested in volunteering, depending on the dates of the forums. All forums will be held in the evening, from about 7 – 9:00 pm.



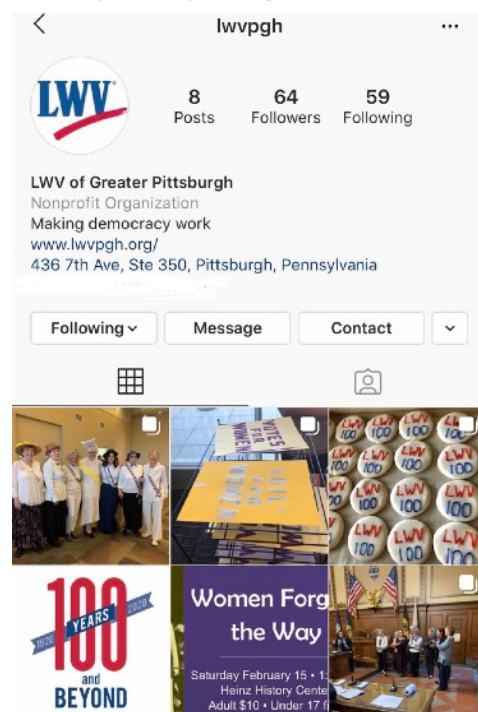
Helping students get registered to vote at CCAC South on Presidents' Day: standing, Kate Porigow; seated, Janet Pritchard.



Students register to vote at the Black History Summit, February 4, at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. The Summit was attended by over 700 high school students from all over South Western PA. Photos by LWVGP member volunteer, Ruth Quint.

LWVGP is now on Instagram! We can use this social media account to post pictures and information about our events and activities. This will allow us to more easily inform local residents about our work as well as connect with other Leagues and organizations from around the country. **Follow our account @lwvpgh!**

If you are interested in opening an account to follow us, you can do so by visiting [Instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/) or by downloading the Instagram app. More information can be found at <https://help.instagram.com/>. —Emily Ferri



LWV Civic Education by Amy Kleissas, Chair High School Project Update for March 2020



We kicked off February high school visits with a successful visit to **South Allegheny High School**. We were asked to return next year! Two more successful visits have followed to **McKeesport High School** and **Elizabeth Forward High School**. More exciting news was that these first three high schools we visited may qualify for the **Governor's Civic Engagement Award** which is promoted by the PA State Department. This award is presented to high schools where the number of eligible seniors who register to vote is 65% - 85% and above.

In February, at an event entitled, "Dinner and Democracy," we will present to young adults who as juveniles were involved in the Child Welfare system. We added a visit to Westinghouse High School in March and rescheduled Brentwood High School due to a snow day. We also committed to a tabling event for students conducted by the Cultural Trust, coordinated by Judy Clack. If all goes as planned, we should reach approximately 1300 students in February and March with our high school civic education/voter registration effort.

It has become apparent that people are waking up to the reality that time is short before the April 28 Primary Election. We have received inquiries for high school visits to additional (large) high schools *potentially doubling our reach to students*. We are pursuing fundraising options to cover these additional costs.

Our current presenters, *Susan Duncan, Susan Fair, Amy Kleissas, Michele Knoll, and Joanne Moore* met in January to gather student and teacher materials required for high school visits. In January and February, I conducted a training for three new high school presenters (*Sheila Dattilo, Darcy Zotter and Kate Gaffney; Sue Ellen Ganz will also train soon*). This will bring our high school capacity to nine presenter/volunteer teams! I also had another training/orientation for new League members who wish to focus efforts on college student voter registration. At that training, we reviewed the "Voting Made Easy" PowerPoint presentation and strategized about how to reach college-age youth. This initiative is actively in progress, with Judy Clack coordinating. *Thank you to all who have volunteered for our high school and college visits beginning in February as presenters or helpers!*

Beth Dolinar from WQED contacted us with a request to include our project (our presentation in a high school classroom) in their effort to inform citizens about voting issues prior to the General Election. Each voter-related segment will remain on their website for one month, continuing until November 3rd. Plans for filming us are in progress as our concerns for the privacy of students, our nonpartisan position, and the fidelity of our program are addressed. We will also participate in a February 20th meeting of many Allegheny County community organizations who are involved in student voter registration. Beside coordinating everyone's involvement, it is our hope that this meeting will result in successful fundraising.

- **Duquesne University – January 23;** We were invited by Dr. Sheahan to visit her social justice class for our civic education lesson and voter registration. We presented to 80 students who switched between our PowerPoint and a session with artist Penny Mateer. Students made fabric, quilted VOTE signs to distribute throughout campus. Coordinated by Judy Clack with a great volunteer team, we received very positive feedback.
- **South Allegheny HS – February 5:** Completed a successful visit! [Presented to 72 seniors and received 56 student registrations.](#) *Thank you, presenters and volunteers!*
- **McKeesport Area HS – February 12;** Completed a successful visit! [Presented to 140 seniors and received 94 student registrations.](#) *Thank you, presenters and volunteers!*

Continued next page

- Elizabeth Forward – February 18; Completed a successful visit! **Presented to 137 seniors and received 112 student registrations.** *Thank you, presenters and volunteers!*
- Chartiers Valley – February 21; *We have enough volunteers.*
- “My Place” at Uptown Lofts – February 26 (6pm – 8pm); *We have enough volunteers.*

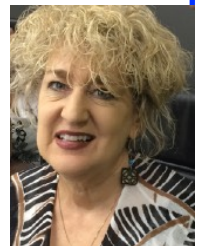
March High School Visits to Date:

- Brentwood HS – **RESCHEDULED FOR MARCH 2**; Our original date was canceled due to a snow day. *We may have enough volunteers.*
- Clairton City – March 4; *We have enough volunteers.*
- Westinghouse – March 11; *Have preliminary information; more will follow.*
- Plum Borough – March 17; *For now, planning for two teams and schedule is being finalized; Have 12 volunteers.*
- Penn Hills – March 25; *Will have 4 teams, 2 shifts for 3 of the teams. We have enough volunteers.*
- Propel Braddock – March 31; **Need more information**; *For now, have 6 volunteers.*
- Cultural Trust Tabling Event- March 28 for “Bookish in the ‘Burgh” (6:15pm – 8:30pm);
400-500 students—Judy Clack coordinating; *We have enough volunteers.*

A NEW PROJECT FROM THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER PITTSBURGH FRAMEWORK PLANNING GUIDE, March 2020 by Amy Kleissas

As a new or longtime member, have you ever asked yourself, “***What in the world does our League really do?***”

The **Framework Planning Guide** is a structured outline in the form of a table that will help to answer this question. This table is divided into three parts; the February VOTER featured an article describing the project and Objective #1. ***Please click on the hot link on the email page of the March VOTER to see Objective #2*** or access it from here at http://lwvpgh.org/files/framework_planning_objective_2.pdf. The April VOTER will feature Objective #3.



Effective organizations employ management systems that allow for a review of past accomplishments in order to set new goals for the future. The management system used in the Framework Planning Guide is a system called “Objectives and Key Results” or “OKR’s.” Three broad Objectives help to define all that our League does:

- **Objective #1:** Encourage all citizens to participate in their democracy
- **Objective #2:** Provide opportunities for members and citizens to learn without bias about their government and public policy issues and provide guidance to members on using League consensus positions in advocacy
- **Objective #3:** Maintain and grow our organization, while increasing a more diverse membership

The usefulness of this management system goes beyond defining the goals and priorities of our League each year. It can also be used as a recruiting and welcoming tool for new members and a “getting to know you” tool for fundraising. For more detail, see the February Voter at <http://lwvpgh.org/files/february2020.pdf>.

Our League has many avenues of communication, like social media, email, the Blast, the VOTER and a new website. As another means of communication, the Framework Planning Guide provides a “big picture” of the many amazing things in which our members are involved. Get even more involved this coming year and help our League fulfill its mission: *Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy.*

EDUCATION ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORT by Joan Franklin and Phyllis Dreyfuss

The League Education Advocacy committee is currently working to put together a report on School Choice, which we hope to present to the units and then perhaps to the community. There are two issues that are of particular concern and interest to us (and should be to all of you who care about quality public education). The first is Governor's Wolf's Charter Reform measures that are now being considered in the legislature. We will be circulating petitions that will then be sent to the legislators through the umbrella organization of which League is a member: School Works PA. We have written before concerning these reforms which cover areas like transparency and accountability. There is nothing that suggests eliminating Charter Schools.

The other area of interest is a case that is currently before the U. S. Supreme Court. The case centers around a tax credit scholarship program passed in May 2015 that gave Montanans tax credit for donating to private scholarship organizations, helping students to pay for their choice of private schools. The Department of Revenue rule prevented Christian schools from receiving these scholarships. The Montana Supreme Court Ruling struck down the private voucher program. Government money going to religious schools doesn't necessarily violate the First Amendment, but the courts have split on whether excluding schools from program violates religious freedom. The case has drawn understandably tremendous interest. The ruling on this case will impact states like Pennsylvania that have tax credit scholarship programs that are for private and parochial schools. Some questions to be considered: Is this a question of religious freedom? Because the money is voluntarily given, should the state be involved at all?

NON-FICTION BOOK CLUB by Phyllis Dreyfuss

As we do every month, the non-fiction book club met to discuss books dealing with the current issues. For the last four months, we changed our format. We chose a topic, and everyone read a book of their own choosing. In that way, we have a much broader view of the subject from many perspectives. In November and December, 2019, the subject was immigration. We devoted two wonderfully interesting meetings to many different views.

For the months of January and February, we discussed the issue of justice in America. The number of books is overwhelming, but the bottom line is always "the injustice of the justice system." One book that several people read and found painful but important was *Just Mercy* — highly recommended. Another book was *Locking Up Our Own*; a fascinating look at the role of the African American Community in DC in the 70's and 80's in favor of "locking them up" which led to the surge of incarceration and harsh punishment. Another was: *Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town* -- about rape on college campuses and the complicity of the administration and the justice departments. Several people reported on *Charged* — a renowned journalist and legal commentator exposes the unchecked power of the prosecutor as a driving force in America's mass incarceration crisis — and charts a way out. The reviewers of this book felt they learned a great deal about the whole judicial system — prosecutor, defense, bail and more.

For the month of March, we decided to give ourselves a break and read *Gutsy Women – Favorite Stories of Courage and Resilience* by Hillary and Chelsea Clinton. Broaden your knowledge of current topics and join us on the third Friday of the month at 10:15 am at the Squirrel Hill Library. You will be most welcomed.

NEW MEMBERS

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