

The Voter

SUMMER 2023

newsletter from the
League of Women Voters
of Bucks County



Message from the President

It has been a busy spring as we transition from one League year to the next. Our new board has been sworn in and we are beginning to map out our plans for the 2023-24 League year. There are some great events in store. At the May Annual meeting, we enlarged our Advocacy team to 5 Issue Specialists covering the issues chosen by the membership during our February Program Planning. The topics and leaders for the coming year are:

- Education Equity – Liz Downing
- Electoral College – Jillian Giaccio
- Open Primaries – Liz Fritsch
- Rules Reform – Sharon Forte
- Voter Access – Monica Weninger

Each of these issue specialists is convening committees to help them follow the issues and keep us and the public informed of developments relating to each issue. We will be having at least one educational program relating to each of these issues during the year, and we will try to create some Speakers Bureau programs on these topics which we can take “on the road”. To participate in any of the meetings of these groups, please contact us [HERE](#) for meeting times and locations. Descriptions of the committees are on page 2.

IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES

Last day to Register to Vote:
October 23, 2023

Last Day to Request a mail-in or
Absentee Ballot:
October 31, 2023

Municipal Election:
November 7, 2023

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Jean Weston
President

LWVBC – empowering voters

Each Advocacy team is pursuing the following activities:

Education

- Following legislation affecting education funding in Pennsylvania.
- Attending school board meetings to keep abreast of specific hot topics in various school districts (committee members are following the Central Bucks, Palisades and Penridge School Districts; volunteers are needed to monitor other districts in the county)
- Monitoring the activities of the various district Intermediate Units.
- Following legislation at the state and federal level related to Education.
- Learning about education solutions in other states which might address problems facing Pennsylvania.
- Following controversies relating to Title IX
- Working to ensure that Civics education is taught in all grades, K-12.

Electoral College

- Working towards Pennsylvania joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact
- Working with LWVUS and BallotPA to ultimately eliminate the Electoral College.

Open Primaries

- Working to modify Pennsylvania's election laws so that all voters, including third party and independent voters, can vote in Primary Elections

Rules Reform

- Working with Fair Districts PA (an offshoot of the LWV of Pennsylvania) to improve the rules that determine which legislation gets a hearing and a vote in the state legislature
- Working to improve the chances that bipartisan legislation can pass in the legislature.

Voter Access

- Monitoring and opposing all legislation which limits access to the ballot – voter I.D. laws, the elimination of mail-in ballots or drop boxes, etc.

To participate in one of these committees, please keep an eye on the info blast for meeting dates and times or contact the office at

LWVBucksPA@gmail.com

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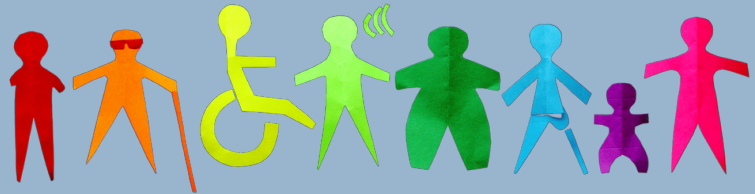
LWVBC - defending democracy

AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT - ENSURING THAT ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE BALLOT BOX

by Sandra Kerr

July 26 th marks the 33 rd anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. The ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs. The law has far-reaching impacts, including making our elections more accessible to Americans with mental or physical disabilities. By requiring polling places to provide necessary public accommodations for voters with disabilities, the ADA plays a critical role in helping ensure that all eligible voters have access to the ballot box. To learn more about the ADA click [here](#).

There are about 40 million eligible disabled voters in the U.S. Unfortunately, in the 2020 Presidential election, one in nine (11%) voters with



disabilities encountered difficulties in voting, which was almost twice the rate of voters without disabilities. But instead of addressing these barriers and making voting more accessible, many states are introducing legislation that makes it more burdensome for people with disabilities to vote. The League of Women Voters of the US and Leagues across the country, including LWVPA, are working tirelessly to fight anti-voter efforts, like restrictive voter ID measures which disproportionately affect people with disabilities – many of whom lack driver's licenses. Our democracy is powered by a diversity of voices and the League of Women Voters is committed to ensuring that our nation's elections are free, fair and accessible for all eligible voters.

One outcome of the disability rights movement and passage of the ADA, was the establishment of Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs were created to be run by and for people with disabilities, and offer support, advocacy, and information on empowerment in the attainment of independence from a peer viewpoint. There are 17 CILs in Pennsylvania. The Bucks County CIL, located in Bensalem, provides 5 core services – information and referral, independent living skills educational, peer support, and advocacy – to anyone with any type of disability at any age.

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LWVBC – engaging members

AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT – ENSURING THAT ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE BALLOT BOX

In advance of the upcoming 2023 municipal elections, the League of Women Voters of Bucks County is partnering with the Bucks County Center for Independent Living and the Bucks County Board of Elections in two events offering students and young adults with disabilities the opportunity to experience the voting process using the county’s voting equipment in order to give them the confidence to vote at the polls. These events will also include voter registration and educational materials on voting and voting rights for people with disabilities. The events are scheduled for August 28 th at the Newtown campus of Bucks County Community College and September 11 th at the Lower Bucks campus.

If you are interested in volunteering to help at one or both events, please send an email to LWVBC Voter Services chair Savanna Mapelli at lwvbuckspa@gmail.com.

LWVPA BIENNIAL CONVENTION

by Jillian Giacco

Eight members of the Bucks County League joined 84 delegates from 25 local Leagues in Harrisburg for LWVPA’s Biennial Convention, which sets the League’s agenda for the next two years. The convention weekend included both structured plenary sessions governed by Robert’s Rules of Order and informal opportunities to connect with other League members over breakfast and lunch.

While we enjoyed some lively debate over proposed updates to the state bylaws, all the changes passed were ultimately minor adjustments in wording. The convention voted in the most diverse board in LWVPA’s history. The new board members are diverse in terms of both demographics and professional background, and we look forward to seeing the great work they do in their new roles. The delegates also approved the 2024 budget and minor wording updates to League positions on natural gas extraction, juvenile justice and pipelines.

LWVPA proposed two studies, which are part of the League’s formal procedure for adopting or changing a position. The delegates voted to “review and revise” these positions instead, which will allow for more flexibility than the official study process. The first review and revision will look at the League’s position on merit selection of judges, specifically how indicators of merit intersect with privilege.

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LWVPA BIENNIAL CONVENTION

The second will address the scope of the pooling position, which covers situations where individual property rights and environmental best practices may be in conflict.

The convention also adopted concurrences with LWV New Mexico and LWV California. Concurrences allow us to adopt another League's position without doing our own study. We adopted LWVNM's environmental justice position and LWVCA's position on sustainable agriculture and reducing food waste.

Outside of the plenary sessions, we had the opportunity to chat with members from across the state and hear about both region-specific challenges and the great work different local Leagues are doing. Representatives from partner organizations also spoke, and the National Council of Negro Women co-hosted an evening reception to celebrate the partnership between our organizations.

Throughout the weekend, we gathered for caucus discussions, which were presentations and discussions on specific topics and organizations. These included the need to treat climate change as the emergency it is and the serious problems in our state's formula for special education funding. PA Youth Vote gave a presentation on the excellent work the organization is doing to register and engage high-school-aged voters and future voters.

The highlight of the caucus discussions was a presentation and conversation about Juneteenth. We learned about the history of the holiday and heard several members speak passionately about the need for difficult conversations and hard work toward racial justice. This included acknowledging that putting our DEI policy into practice means taking the Juneteenth holiday into account while scheduling future conventions. Overall, the 2023 Convention was an interesting and productive weekend. Details on all the items passed are available on [LWVPA's website](#) and in these [notes](#).



Top row (L-R) Barbara O'Donnell, Andrea Kircher, Sandra Kerr, Denise Giacco, Jillian Giacco
Front Row: Monica Wening, Jean Weston, Julie Becker