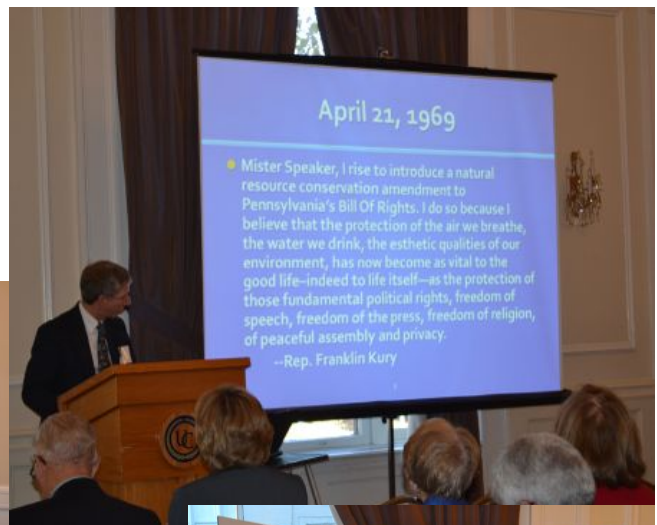


League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

THE VOTER

Volume 21, No. 4

December 2014 - January 2015



Photos from the Shale and Public Health Conference, clockwise from top left: Judy Hughes of Washington County LWV welcomes a conference participant • Prof. John Dernbach shows an image of Rep. Franklin Kury's speech introducing the environmental amendment to the PA Constitution in 1969 • display of the Protect Our Children Coalition • Laryn Finder, Annette Shimer and LWVPA President Susan Carty • Shirley McIlvried, Mary Beth Sweeney, Conference Moderator Vera Bonnet of Indiana County LWV and LWVPA VP Issues and Action Betty Tatham • Interns Claire Swauger and Moriah Rakas staffing the registration desk. Article and another photo on page 9.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our Positions, a Good Read, and a Little Personal History



The League is a multi-faceted organization. Not a new comment about our organization but one I have come face to face with again in recent weeks. One only has to look at the wide variety of positions on the local, state and national level to appreciate our broad interests.

Some complain that our positions are old. Yet year after year we retain many because we aren't through. There is more to do.

Thanks to the leadership and persistence of Mary Larsen, we have recent information on a number of areas. For example, are you aware that the Home Rule Charter for Allegheny County comes up for review in 2015? We'll have a chance to explore more of this in the December unit meetings. Please join us.

Clean Politics Clean Streams – a Legislative Autobiography and Reflections by Franklin Kury

What a good read. An interesting story. Franklin Kury was a member of the PA House of Representatives and later the Senate from 1966 through 1980. This story of Kury's political life details one of his crowning achievements – the environmental amendment to the State constitution. While I did not know most of the people he worked with I certainly admire his ability to successfully work with a wide range of constituencies.

Volume 21, No 4, December 2014-January 2015

Published monthly September-June except January by

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh
436 Seventh Ave., Suite 350
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-261-4284

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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He was a political junkie as was I. A few copies of Kury's book are available in the League office. Cost is \$24.00 and benefits the LWVGP.



Franklin Kury signing his books at the Shale Conference

Where are you from? What's your major? The first two questions I remember again and again in college. Government was my major or political science as many call it. Later a Greyhound bus deposited this neophyte in Washington, DC. Initially I was a typist in the legislative service division of the Library of Congress and later a Research Assistant in the US Senate Library. My three roommates and I represented a wide range of philosophy and background: One Southern lady with a drawl so wide I thought I would fall asleep listening to her. She, in turn, could not understand this fast talking Yankee. The Texas Dixiecrat introduced me to some racist language and attitudes and the Midwestern Republican was the first high school graduate in her family. We lived together; we shared and learned from each other.

In the League we have an opportunity to learn and grow and sometimes work hard not to be close minded. Explore the opportunities. Join a committee.

– Annette Shimer

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Pennsylvania	717-234-1576	www.palwv.org	
National	202-429-1965	www.lwv.org	
Facebook	www.facebook.com	Search: League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh	

EDUCATION COMMITTEE NOTES

There will be **no Education Committee meeting in December.**

In January the committee will consider the lack of an equitable, reliable formula of the distribution of state funding for education. Pennsylvania Senator Matt Smith has been invited to attend this meeting. Sen. Smith has recently been appointed to the Basic Education Funding Commission that will be making recommendations to the General Assembly on a basic education funding formula. He has written an article that appears on Page 2 of his newsletter about his experience in this area and goals for the commission's process. You can find the article at http://www.senatormattsmith.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Newsletter_Fall_14.pdf.

Standing Meetings

Board Meetings

- ✓ Held on the **second** Monday of the month (a change in 2014 from the first Monday)
- ✓ Meet for lunch at 11:30 a.m., place TBA.
- ✓ Meeting: 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. in the LWVGP CIC (office) conference room at 436 Seventh Ave., Suite 350

Local Area Meetings

- ✓ **Pittsburgh Central:** 2nd Friday, 1:30 p.m. at the Squirrel Hill Public Library, 5801 Forbes Ave., Pgh. PA 15217. Bring a bag lunch (optional). Contact Martha Raak at 412-802-7266 or marbiker1@gmail.com
- ✓ **North Hills:** 3rd Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church, 311 Cumberland Rd., Pgh. PA 15237. Contact Shirley McIlvried at 412-364-7329 or howardmciiii@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

- ✓ **Non-fiction Book Club**
3rd Friday, 10:15 a.m. at the Squirrel Hill Public Library. Contact Naomi Frenkel at 412-818-2240 or nf1428@gmail.com
- ✓ **Education Committee**
4th Wednesday, 1-3 p.m., Squirrel Hill Library
Contact Evelyn Murrin at 412-661-3306 or evelynmurrin@aol.com

DECEMBER 2014 - FEBRUARY 2015 CALENDAR

December 2014	
04 Thu	South Hills Local Area Meeting – Fair Housing & LWV Positions
08 Mon	Board Meeting
12 Fri	Pittsburgh Central Local Meeting – Fair Housing & LWV Positions
16 Tue	Chanukah begins at sundown
17 Wed	North Hills Local Area Meeting – Fair Housing & LWV Positions
19 Fri	Office on short hours (Mon & Thu only) until 1/5/15
19 Fri	Naturalization, Federal Courthouse, 10 a.m.
19 Fri	Non-Fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 a.m.
25 Thu	Christmas Day, office closed
26 Fri	Kwanzaa begins
January 2015	
05 Mon	Office reopens, normal hours
08 Thu	South Hills Local Area Meeting – Potluck & Program Planning
09 Fri	Pittsburgh Central Local Meeting – Potluck & Program Planning
12 Mon	Board meeting
16 Fri	Non-Fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 a.m.
16 Fri	Naturalization, Federal Courthouse, 10 a.m.
19 Mon	Martin Luther King holiday, office closed
21 Wed	North Hills Local Area Meeting – Potluck & Program Planning
28 Wed	Education Committee, Squirrel Hill Library, 1-3 p.m.
February 2015	
05 Thu	South Hills Local Area Meeting – Program TBD
09 Mon	Board meeting
13 Fri	Pittsburgh Central Local Meeting – Program TBD
14 Sat	LWV Birthday – 95 years!
16 Mon	Presidents Day
18 Wed	North Hills Local Area Meeting – Program TBD
20 Fri	Non-Fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 a.m.
20 Fri	Naturalization, Federal Courthouse, 10 a.m.
25 Wed	Education Committee, Squirrel Hill Library, 1-3 p.m.

UNITS AND COMMITTEES by Maureen Mamula, VP Program



December and January Unit Meetings

We have lots of interesting programs coming up. ***We are going to break with tradition and hold meetings in December***, as a prelude to the PPP in January – that is, potluck and program planning! For December, we will have a speaker from the **Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations, Sarah Kinter** who will be coming to each local area meeting to discuss fair housing for part of the meeting – an issue we want to explore is the **Affordable Housing Task Force**.

We will also be looking at the work some of our members have done in pulling together what the League's current position is on various local topics – from the county level on down (pages 6-8). This is an opportunity for members to get started on reviewing possible topics before the planning meetings in January – so that we have all had the chance to read over the possibilities, rather than seeing them for the first time in January.

One other change – the South Hills meeting in January will take place on January 8th, rather than January 1 (which is New Years Day). So again – meeting dates in December will be South Hills December 4th from 12:30-2:30, December 12th for Pittsburgh Central at the Squirrel Hill Library from 1:30-3:30 and December 17th for North Hills at St John's Lutheran Church from 10-12. January meetings will be January 8th for South Hills, January 9th for Pittsburgh Central and January 21 for North Hills. Locations for the potlucks will be confirmed and sent out in December – watch your email!

Education and Water Study Committees

There is some great work going on in these two committees! The education committee sponsored local school district speakers about the Common Core and its use and implementation in public schools at all the local area meetings in October. The speakers gave background information on how the Common Core was being tweaked in Pennsylvania and how our districts have had to adapt to requirements. I was active in the PTA while our daughter was in school (she graduated from high school in 2010) but found out that much work goes on behind the scenes that we are not normally aware of in our districts. The administrators covered what is done to ensure that a curriculum is designed, supporting textbooks acquired, teachers trained, lessons plans reworked and students given the instruction and remediation needed for them to be successful in our challenging world.

The water study committee gave another thoughtful and interesting presentation in November. The information they covered was very interesting and I think is helping all of us to look closer at our surroundings. I was out with my husband and walking on a path where I made him stop while I stooped down to examine the permeable pavement much closer – thanks to the water study committee. We all have busy lives, but these groups are doing phenomenal work in spite of that! They are both open to all – even if you can't make all the meetings, I would suggest trying to make at least one of them to see the work they are doing.

NON-FICTION BOOK CLUB NEWS

Meetings of the LWVGP Non-Fiction Book Club are held on the 3rd Friday at the Squirrel Hill Library. Please try to arrive at 10:15 so that we can begin our discussion at 10:30. Here are the next two book selections.

- December: *A Fighting Chance* by Elizabeth Warren
- January: *Lawrence in Arabia* by Scott Anderson

We welcome any and all new visitors and prospective members. For more information, contact Naomi Frenkel at 412-818-2240 or nf1428@gmail.com.

RECENT INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON CURRENT LWVGP POSITIONS by Mary Larsen



These paragraphs contain recent information that a group of members including **Annette Shimer, Barb Simpson, Nina Helbling, Adelaide Smith, Patricia Maxwell, Evelyn Murrin and myself** have gathered concerning LWVGP positions. *The text in italics states recommendations by those members for retaining, updating or dropping a position.* Only positions for which there is recent information or a recommended change appear on these pages.

This assessment of LWVGP positions is still a work in progress. Some recent information is still being collected. A more complete document will contain the position statements, more recent information, more recommendations and some thoughts about why some positions should be retained. The group anticipates distributing this document by email in advance of the December local area meetings.

These pages should be read with the LWVGP positions available for reference. LWVGP positions are on our new website at http://lwvpgh.org/about_action.html and in the 2014 Annual Meeting Workbook. (In the workbook, the order of the positions is slightly different in that the unit positions are integrated into the relevant topics rather than grouped at the end.)

MERGER OF CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (2005)

Recent Information: LWVGP has 3 positions that address the structure and operations of Allegheny County government. Some of these go back as far as 1963 and some overlap the City of Pittsburgh government. Some recommendations, such as the adoption of a County Home Rule Charter, have been accomplished. Some, such as the consolidation of duplicative services between the City and County, have been partially completed and others are still in process. The merger of City and County governments has been very much affected by political leadership but at this time there does not appear to be interest in moving forward. Cooperation between the County and local governments is a broad and still relevant issue.

Recommendation: *In view of the fact that the County Home Rule Charter comes up for review in 2015, it would seem wise to retain these positions but also develop a committee to recommend changes in the wording to eliminate those things which have been done or those things which are no longer needed. However, at this point we should retain our ability to take action if necessary and timely.*

TRANSPORTATION 1965 updated 1986)

Recent Information: In 2011 Port Authority transit cuts left many parts of Allegheny County without transit service. While trips are being added to nine **existing** routes to ease overcrowding, there have been no announced plans to restore service to routes/areas without service since 2011. Several League members met with County Executive Rick Fitzgerald; Robert Hurley, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Port Authority (PAT); and Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto. All are relieved the State passed a bill giving them more funds to operate, but how the money will be used should be a concern of the public.

Items high on the priority list are:

1. preparing the request for funds to support Bus Rapid Transit between Oakland and Downtown,
2. providing safe routes for bicyclists, and
3. re-configuring the way buses enter and leave the downtown area. There was no mention of restoring or implementing requests for additional bus routes.

A BRT system linking downtown to Oakland (a subway-like bus system in the Forbes and Fifth avenue corridor) was proposed more than five years ago. Since then, only a tiny piece of the work needed to make the project a reality has been completed. To date, at least \$1.5 million has been spent to perform “alternatives analysis and environmental review” and in October of 2014 the Port Authority board, at a special meeting, amended its capital budget to add \$1.56 million in funding for preliminary engineering and environmental review. The P.A. Chairman Robert Hurley, could not offer a prediction about when construction could start. And in a comment reported in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald said “it is likely the county will draw another \$1 million from its tax on poured alcoholic drinks to fill the remaining gap in funding for preliminary engineering and environmental review.”

Allegheny County (2015 Budget): The 2015 Capital Budget provides a total of \$11 million in funding to the Allegheny County Port Authority for acquisition, construction and improvement of the public transportation system. For the most part, county funding represents 3 1/3% of the cost of a project and is matched by state funds (16 2/3 %) and federal funds (80%). The 2015 budget provides \$9 million in funding for improvements and upgrades to the Port Authority's fixed facilities and rolling fleet. Combined, the match funding will allow the Port Authority to leverage an additional \$168.45 million in federal and state funds for its capital programs.

See <http://county.allegheny.pa.us/budget/2015/fiscplan.aspx>

State Budget 2015 (Act 89): Signed by Governor Corbett in November, Act 89 increases transportation (roads, bridges, transit) investment by 2.3 billion by 2018. Transit also is now on firm footing for the future as Act 89 provides an additional \$207 million this year and at least \$480 million after five years. ACT 89 funding allows PAAC to target improvements such as overcrowding on routes and on-time performance issues.

Recommendation: *It would seem that there is enough going on with the state and county budgets, particularly with the Port Authority that an ongoing update is needed with, perhaps, a new position statement.*

Note: The LWVPA has a position on transportation that says: "Promote energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems that afford access to housing and jobs, relieve congestion and enhance the quality of life in communities of all sizes. Support predictable public funding that enables fiscally stable transportation systems to provide consistent levels of service."

PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENT

Recent Information: Here are some of the comments of a lawyer involved longtime with the tax assessment process and currently serving as a hearing officer.

- (1)(2) Essentially these two subsections are being accomplished.
- (3) Annual process reassessment: Those working on assessments believe that revaluation every three years would bring more equity to the results as rising and falling real estate values would be evidence by sales prices.
- (4) The annual State Tax Equalization Board merely gives a statistical picture of how assessed values compare to sales prices for the most recent year.
- (5) Qualified department personnel has been cut to the bone. There is a need more qualified personnel.
- (6) The Appeals Board of 7 people are appointed. They receive the final assessment after the appeals have been heard. A single board member can override the recommendation of the hearing officer.
- (7) A public relations person is needed to improve everyone's understanding of the assessment and appeals process. Working with other taxing bodies on matters affecting property valuations would contribute to assuring that accurate changes in valuations are recorded.

A colleague of the aforementioned lawyer has offered to meet with League members who are interested in getting more information.

LIBRARIES (1978, LAST UPDATED 1997)

Recent Information: The Allegheny County Library Association is comprised of forty-four public libraries, including Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, (which has nineteen branches, among them the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped). This federated system offers reciprocal borrowing; return to any unit; a merged catalog of system holdings; inter-library loan services; resource sharing; computerization of library services (including hours of operation, program offerings, location); access by the public to computer services; support for local library boards in budget development and in an advisory capacity. The foregoing are elements of the current LWV position.

The LWVGP recommendation of centralized purchasing is available on a limited basis. The final facet of the LWV position, advocating for a fair method of assessing municipalities for funding needs, including long-range plans is addressed in the following ways: Regional Asset District funds (varying from year to year, based on the intake from this 1% sales and use tax assessment and the distribution formula applied), state library aid support (based on the annual state budget), state table gaming support, and county, local and other support (e.g., fines, grants, fundraisers). State monies are apportioned based on population, level of library services, and the amount of local support. The City of Pittsburgh voted in 2011 to have a Library tax of .25 mills. Springdale Borough and Cheswick both adopted a library tax. Monroeville, Harmar, and Springdale Township voted no on a similar proposal. Finally, in 2014, the Buhl Foundation chaired a County-City Library Service Panel. Their report was issued in July 2014. Funding remains the weakest link in fulfilling the LWVGP expectations.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS (1997, merged area positions)

Recommendations: From the LWV's 1997 merged area positions, the following changed may be in order:

1. Add "racial" (before the words "integration") to define the intent of the position. Take out "compensatory programs" (as that term is no longer in use) and substitute "equitable opportunities" so that the sentence would read: "Racial integration in any school district from the elementary level onward with equitable opportunities to supplement the process of racial integration but not substitute for it."

5. In light of "Common Core Standards" entering the picture, "teacher training and staff development" terms carry extra gravity. The Education Committee understands that to attain the new standards, teacher training and staff development will take years not simply professional development days.

Recommendation: Add the word "extensive" teacher training and staff development.

CABLE TELEVISION (broadcast of public meetings) (1997, merged unit positions)

Recent Information: Mt. Lebanon broadcasts their Commission and School Board meetings, but the quality of sound is very poor on the Commission programs.

MT. LEBANON HOME RULE CHARTER (1985)

Recent Information: In 2013, an Ad Hoc Committee of seven residents was appointed to review the Charter (adopted in 1974) and recommend appropriate changes. The review has been completed and many changes have been proposed to the Commissioners of which two were passed on the November 2014 ballot. The first made the Charter verbiage gender neutral. The second permits the Commission to add methods of public notice required for certain types of notices, e.g., electronic notification. Additional proposed changes will be placed on future ballots at the Commission's pleasure. The one having to do with the Treasurer may have been affected by a court ruling.

Recommendation: The League should retain this position in order to allow Mt. Lebanon members to advocate adoption of those changes with which they agree or work against those with which they disagree.

MT. LEBANON MUNICIPAL BUDGET (1981)

Recommendation: No action has been taken on this position for about 20 years. Suggestion is to drop it.

MT. LEBANON TREASURER'S OFFICE (1985)

Recent Information: One of the recommended changes in the Home Rule Charter review is to make the Treasurer's office appointed rather than elected. If a recent court ruling doesn't negate a possible change an amendment to make the Treasurer appointed will most likely appear on the ballot in 2015.

Recommendation: Retain the position.

PITTSBURGH CENTRAL UNIT POSITION: HOUSING

Recommendation: The housing position should be amended to note that the City now has a Commission on Human Relations established in 1955. Protected classes include: race, national origin, disabilities, age, sexual orientation and familial status.

Recent Information: The grant funds to start the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Task Force were doled out by the City of Pittsburgh Planning Department to the Commission based on the Analysis of Impediments recommendations. The focus of CDBG funding, in general, is to target developments in low-to-moderate income areas.

"Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" is a standard set by HUD (the agency responsible for providing CDBG funds to "financially stressed" municipalities) to improve housing opportunities.

Recommendation: In light of the Task Force, retain the housing positions for both the City and the County.

THE LWVPA CONVENTION IS COMING TO PITTSBURGH – WE NEED HELP

by Eileen Olmsted, Chair, 2015 LWVPA Convention, Local Arrangements Committee



The 2015 LWVPA Convention Local Arrangements Committee is pleased to announce that we have chosen the venue for the Convention which will be held here in Pittsburgh June 5-6-7 of next year. The brand new and beautiful boutique Hotel Monaco located at 620 William Penn Place (at the corner of 6th Avenue) is our choice. The hotel compliments the LWVPA Convention theme: “Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going” as it is a new hotel in a re-purposed building.

The Monaco, a Kimpton hotel, will have a Pittsburgh inspired décor and will offer several special amenities for guests including free coffee every morning and free wine in the evening. They have also offered to schedule a free yoga class during the convention. The management has been eager to accommodate the League as it has a special interest in encouraging women to use their hotels. A rooftop terrace, available for a Friday evening reception, will offer unparalleled views of Pittsburgh’s beautiful nighttime sky.

If you have ideas about how to make the Convention the great success we expect it to be, please come to our next committee meeting: **December 4th at 9:30 a.m. at Panera** (Boulevard of the Allies near Magee Hospital) If you cannot attend but would like to help call 412-404-2594 or email me at eileeno31@gmail.com.

SHALE AND PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE by Heather Harr



The Shale and Public Health Committee of the LWVPA Straight Scoop on Shale project (funded by a grant from the Colcom Foundation) held its "Days of Discovery" conference on October 26 & 27. This year's conference was hosted by the Pitt Graduate School of Public Health at the Pitt University Club. About 150 attendees – academics, community members, League members, health professionals, lawyers, reporters and college students – learned about the latest research examining potential public health impacts of shale gas development.

Top experts from the Colorado School of Public Health (Lisa McKenzie PhD MPH), University of Missouri School of Medicine (Susan Nagel PhD), the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (Reynold Panettieri MD) and others presented original research. Michael McCawley of WVU discussed the need to modernize regulatory standards and provide better implementation. Pediatrician Jerome Paulson of the Children's National Medical Center spoke during lunch on Monday about civic participation, science and medicine.

On Sunday, Prof. John Dernbach Esq. of Widener's Environmental Law Center presented on the relevance of Pennsylvania's Environmental Amendment (Article I, Section 27) to current court decisions regarding shale gas development. The Hon. Franklin Kury, author of the amendment, inspired the audience with his remembrance of being able to serve the public in government, helping protect the environment for future generations with bi-partisan support.

Videos of the conference presentations will be available at the Straight Scoop on Shale website, <http://shale.palwv.org>. An updated Shale Gas Extraction and Public Health Resource Guide is also available.



Annette and Mary Beth chat with John Smith of Smith Butz, LLC, the lawyer who brought the successful Robinson Township case, which overturned parts of the fracking Act 13 last December.

NEWS FROM STATE AND NATIONAL by Carol Walton



LWVPA: Education is one of the League's priorities. We support equal access to quality public education, to be achieved by participation in government by citizens at all levels and through adequate financing based on an equitable and flexible tax system. A report by **Sharon Kletzien, Education Specialist**, on recent actions taken by the LWVPA appears in the Fall edition of the LWVPA **VOTER**. You can find this information at the LWVPA website at <http://www.palwv.org/education-action> or in the online PDF file of the LWVPA VOTER at http://www.palwv.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Fall-2014-LWVPA_web.pdf. Scroll down to page 2.

LWVUS:

* Elisabeth MacNamara, President of LWVUS released a statement on November 7 regarding an important federal appellate court decision (*Kobach v. EAC*). She stated, "The court's opinion found that documentary proof of citizenship requirements for voter registration added by the states of Kansas and Arizona are illegal." She observed, "Voters should not have to face an obstacle course in order to participate in our democracy. This is a good, strong ruling for voters and for Americans' essential right to vote."

* LWVUS continues to urge members to tell your Representatives in Congress to move forward on the restoration of **voting rights**. The Senate finally held a hearing on the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 (VRAA). That is a good first step, but there's still work to be done. **Tell your Representative to follow the Senate's lead and move forward with a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee.**

Discrimination at the ballot box is real. Access to the vote is about justice and equality. LWVUS remains hopeful that Congress can move quickly to repair the damage caused by the Supreme Court's decision. The VRAA is a step forward for our democracy; in addition to restoring the damage done by the Supreme Court decision, it will also modernize the coverage formula for preclearance to ensure it is based on recent acts of discrimination and provide narrow mechanisms to prevent discrimination in voting nationwide.

* LWVUS is also urging support for the EPA's proposal to limit carbon pollution. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has introduced a proposal to set the first-ever limits on carbon pollution from existing power plants; this proposal is a game changer that will help protect us from the health risks and impacts of climate change.

Power plants are responsible for 40 percent of carbon pollution in the United States, the largest single source of carbon pollution in the country. Carbon pollution is the chief cause of climate change, and reducing the amount of carbon pollution from power plants is a life-saving measure that will reduce the devastating effects of climate change. We currently limit how much mercury, arsenic, soot and other air pollution which power plants can release into our air, but there are no limits on carbon pollution. **Tell the EPA you support their proposal to limit carbon pollution from existing power plants.**

There are instructions for contacting EPA Administrator McCarty on the LWVUS website (www.lwv.org). Click on *limit carbon pollution*. A letter appears there, which you can easily transmit electronically to Administrator McCarthy.

NATURALIZATION CEREMONY by Maureen Mamula



One of the great things about belonging to the League of Women Voters is having the opportunity to participate as the League's representative at the naturalization ceremony held each month at the Federal Courthouse. The League has a member speak each month to the new citizens about the privilege and responsibility of voting. We have the unique opportunity to sit and watch as people from all over the world, who have come to Pittsburgh for very different reasons, take the oath of citizenship. Each time I am there, I am struck again how my citizenship comes as a result of which country I happened to be born in and how these new citizens have made a deliberate choice to become US citizens.

Some have come for educational opportunities and elected to stay, some have come for a job and met and fell in love with someone here and want to raise a family here, some are here due to religious persecution in their native land, some have come here as refugees – either many years ago or more recently. The path to becoming a citizen is not an easy one for these folks – they normally have to be here 5 years before they can apply to be a citizen, and must pass a test and also pay for the privilege of applying to be a citizen. How easy my path was compared to theirs!

The naturalization ceremony is held on the third Friday of each month and is a very moving ceremony. We have several League members who take turns speaking. If you are interested in speaking or helping to pass out the voter registration forms and *Facts for Citizens*, please contact Barb Simpson in our office.



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DEATH BY ARTERIOSCLEROSIS! by Hazel Cope



That was how PA Supreme Court Justice Thomas G. Saylor illustrated Pennsylvania's approach to the Death Penalty (DP)! In an article in the 2013 Widener Law Review he criticized the way in which our state handles this ultimate punishment. Pennsylvania is one of the minority of states in which the death penalty still exists.

Justice Saylor pointed out that Pennsylvania has prisoners who have been on Death Row since the 1980s. He centered on the Commonwealth's provision of counsel to indigent capital defendants, and found it negligent in many respects. One area that concerned him is that mitigation evidence is often not supplied to juries, thus influencing their decisions. "Simply put," he stated, "a reasoned moral judgment needs to be adequately informed." In nearly all cases where the death penalty sentence has been appealed, the conviction has been overturned, sometimes for that very reason. Another frequent problem he described as impairing convictions is "prosecutorial misconduct."

In Pennsylvania we recently had the 250th reversal of a death sentence since DP was reinstated here in 1978. The only three executions here since then have been of men who refused further appeals.

Just think for a moment of the convolutions of the legal system and the money all this must be costing us – the taxpayers. There is also the added cost of maintaining a Death Row for around 200 inmates. They are held in solitary confinement, which is hugely more expensive than the alternative mandatory punishment for First Degree Murder: Life Without Parole. Surveys show that for an increasing number of people, there is concern about the morality of Murder by State. By the way, DP has never been proved to be a deterrent to violent crime.

According to the *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* on 11/5/14: Tom Wolf supports a moratorium on the DP and would not sign death warrants until concerns raised by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the American Bar Association have been addressed. During the gubernatorial campaign, Wolf also supported a moratorium, as did the three other Democrats running in the primary. (See <http://www.timesleader.com/news/local-news-news/50569154/Tom-vs.-Tom:-Where-they-stand-on-the-issues>)

The Pennsylvania State Study of the Death Penalty has at last finished its fact-finding stage, and the report is being prepared. It should have been issued this year, but Philadelphia County was apparently unwilling to share some files and data. That problem has now been resolved. (Interestingly, over the years since 1978, prosecutors in Philadelphia were much more likely to seek the DP than those in Pittsburgh, for similar crimes. I wonder if that was something to do with their aversion to "Sunshine"?). Anyway, I'll let you all know when the Study is published. Just don't hold your breath. Meanwhile, please keep reminding your elected officials that LWV opposes the Death Penalty.

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