

WE THE VOTER

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

Volume 22, No. 5

February 2016

VOTER SERVICE COMMITTEE

2016 will be a big year for Voter Service. LWVGP members are responding to the need. Recently a Voter Service Committee meeting was held at the CIC. It was well attended and looks like a real committee instead of one or two people doing this important work. The committee can always use more members. The next meeting is January 28 at 1:00 p.m. at the CIC.



Photo: Former LWVGP Co-president and Voter Service Chair Arlene Levy, front row second from left, with Ellen Doyle of Pennsylvanians for Fair Elections, third from left, and Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak, fourth from left, at Pittsburgh City Council after passage of Councilwoman Rudiak's "Will of Council" supporting redistricting reform. Details on page 13.

LWVPA VIDEO CONTEST – PUBLICIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF PENNSYLVANIA
High School Video Contest 2016
YOUR VOICE YOUR VOTE Be Heard!
Top prize: \$1000 Deadline: March 1
Length: 30 seconds Details at palwv.org/videocontest/

- ✓ Just 19.9% of 18 to 29 year olds cast ballots in the 2014 election – the lowest rate of youth turnout in over 40 years.
- ✓ The proportion of young people who said they were registered to vote – 46.7% – was also the lowest in the past 40 years.
- ✓ By failing to vote young adults are allowing others to speak for them.
- ✓ What are the issues on which they'd like to vote and be heard? Education? Health care access? Inequality? Climate change? Gun safety?
- ✓ How could they encourage others to vote and be heard?

Contest details are at <http://www.palwv.org/home/videocontest>. The winning video last year and the two runners-up are at <http://www.palwv.org/2015-high-school-video-contest-winners>.

Information for educators is available at <http://palwv.org/videocontest/criteria>.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ANALYZING THE BALLOT



This message is for our political junkie members. History, government or political science studies are not required. Musicians especially should be interested (see paragraph below about The Green Papers).

One of the advantages of attending a meeting with members of the League of Women Voters is the opportunity to participate in a stimulating discussion about an issue and usually learn something new perhaps about a completely unrelated issue. For example, at a recent meeting of the Voter Service Committee we learned about one member's efforts to deal with gas pipes, compressors, and multiple local municipal meetings, all just one-half mile from the family organic farm. At this same meeting, we were identifying offices and candidates to be on the ballot this spring. Short ballot some said: President, U.S. Senator, U.S. House of Representatives, Auditor General, State Treasurer, and Attorney General. No judges. Everyone relaxed.

Many are going to be surprised to see the ballot this spring. Toward the end will be a whole series of names and if you thought figuring out for whom to vote for the PA Supreme Court or the Court of Common Plea, wait until you see the delegate list for the national conventions. Not the League of Women Voters National Convention, but the Democratic and Republican party conventions.

For the Democrats, a 49-page document outlines the procedure. Selection of delegates is ruled by seven sets of rules, regulations, charters and bylaws of both the PA Democratic Party and the National Democratic Party. It is a proportional representative system. See http://www.padems.com/sites/padems/files/PA_Delegate_Selection_Plan.pdf.

Must publicly declare their membership in the party; "under no circumstances shall a contribution [to the party] be mandatory;" (There is a \$25 filing fee to run payable to the PA Department of State.)

181 delegates, 13 alternates of which 104 are elected at the district level. In the three Allegheny County Congressional districts a total of 21 delegates will be chosen. [12th district – 6; 14th district – 9; 18th district – 6] Equal number of men and women. The other delegates come from members of the Democratic National Committee, Senate House members, Governor, "Distinguished Party Leaders." The at-large members are determined at a meeting June 11, 2016. If you are interested, you might consider lobbying the state Democratic chair to become one of seven convention pages. Party goals include having a representational sample of the community. Page 32 lays out the percent and number of delegates in 15 different categories from African-Americans to Seniors & Retirees to Youth.

For Republicans the situation is different. The rules cannot easily be found on the web. What is known is that three delegates are elected from each congressional district. "They shall not be officially committed to any particular candidate on the ballot." The remaining 14 delegates are selected on Saturday, May 21 and are bound to the candidate who receives the most votes in the PA presidential primary.

Another source of information includes The Green Papers at <http://www.thegreenpapers.com/P16/PA-R>. The author, Berg-Andersson, is an alumnus of Boston University's Class of 1978 with a degree in Music, which well prepared him for his role as the political analyst for "The Green Papers." "It was either that or continuing my career as Night Manager for a chain of convenience stores", says Mr. Berg-Andersson. "I figured that if I could do a neo-Schenkerian musical analysis relating the various Interval vectors found in Charles Ives compositions, I could easily master the more arcane procedures of the Caucus/Convention system of choosing National Convention delegates."

— Annette

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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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Email: info@pgh.lwv.org

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| Greater Pittsburgh | 412-261-4284 | lwvpg.org | |
| Pennsylvania | 717-234-1576 | palwv.org | |
| National | 202-429-1965 | lwv.org | |
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 A diverse coalition of over 50 congregations and faith-based organizations acting together on our values in the community



- Public safety
- Worker organizing table
- Rate payer justice
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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 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 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. Contact Billie Girard at 412-531-6859 or billiegirard202@verizon.net
 - ✓ **Money in Politics Committee**
2nd Thursday. Contact Kathie Breckenridge at 412-343-0953 or jxb17@aol.com
 - ✓ **Gun Safety Committee**
Dates TBD. Contact Nancy Naragon at 412-366-2446 or nancynaragon@msn.com
 - ✓ **Non-fiction Book Club**
3rd Friday. Contact Judy Donohue at 412-373-8697 or jtdono71@gmail.com

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2016 CALENDAR

| Late January meetings | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 26 Tue | Government Review Commission – Full Commission, 8:30 a.m. |
| 27 Wed | Education Committee, 1-3 p.m. Squirrel Hill Library (see below) |
| 28 Thu | Voter Service Committee, 1 p.m., CIC |
| February | |
| 04 Thu | South Hills Unit Meeting: Program Planning |
| 08 Mon | Board meeting |
| 11 Thu | Money in Politics Committee meeting, 12:30 |
| 12 Fri | Pittsburgh Central Unit Meeting: Program Planning |
| 14 Sun | LWV Birthday – 96! |
| 15 Mon | Presidents' Day |
| 17 Wed | North Hills Unit Meeting: Program Planning |
| 19 Fri | Naturalization, Federal Courthouse, 10 a.m. |
| 19 Fri | Non-Fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 a.m. |
| 23 Tue | Government Review Commission – Full Commission, 3:00 p.m. |
| 24 Wed | Education Committee meeting, 1-3 p.m. Squirrel Hill Library |
| March | |
| 03 Thu | South Hills unit meeting: LWVPA Criminal Justice Study |
| 08 Fri | Pittsburgh Central Unit Meeting: LWVPA Criminal Justice Study |
| 14 Mon | Board meeting |
| 16 Wed | North Hills unit meeting: LWVPA Criminal Justice Study |
| 18 Fri | Naturalization, Federal Courthouse, 10 a.m. |
| 18 Fri | Non-Fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 a.m. |
| 23 Wed | Education Committee meeting, 1-3 p.m. Squirrel Hill Library |
| 27 Sun | Easter Sunday |
| 29 Tue | Government Review Commission – Final meeting, 8:30 a.m. |

January Education Committee Meeting *Charter Schools: What We Want To Know Now*

Always a lively topic, "Charter Schools" have evolved over the last 20 years. Jeanne Diana, a Virginia university educator, leader, and League member who was raised in and returned to Pittsburgh, will lead a discussion about current findings on the Progress and Status of Charter Schools.

PROGRAM PLANNING FOR 2016 by Maureen Mamula



We have two avenues to possibly pursue for our program planning meetings in February. The first avenue is the one closest to home – our position on local issues. Our current positions are available on our website at <http://lwvpg.org/files/policypositions.pdf>. Last year we looked at and updated the wording in some of our local positions, and we will be looking at updating the wording in other local positions during our February planning meetings. The old sections and the suggested updates (based on work done by members over the last two years) will be sent out in late January for the February planning meetings.

The second avenue for us to consider is giving input to the National League on national positions. The National Convention will be held in Washington DC this June and needs guidance from all of us about what path to take over the next two years. The following input comes from National League about possible program for 2016-2018.

Key Structures of Democracy was the focus of the program adopted at the 2014 Convention for the 2014-2016 biennium. In addition to ongoing work to protect the vote and reform elections, this comprehensive program consists of:

1. A study of the process of amending the United States Constitution; *(we held consensus meetings in October and forwarded our input)*
2. A review and update of the League position on campaign finance in light of forty years of change since the Watergate reforms; *(we held consensus meetings in January and forwarded our input)*
3. A review of the redistricting process for the United States Congress for the purpose of developing action steps.

As Convention 2016 looms ever larger on the horizon, how have we done on this program? And, while we may complete these tasks we set in 2014, what does this mean in terms of our overarching campaign to protect and expand voting rights in the 21st Century?

Looking Ahead to 2016 and Beyond

Overview of a Possible Program Focus: Making Democracy Work

As Convention 2016 and Election 2016 and their outcomes draw near, it is abundantly clear that our work is far from finished in making democracy work for every voter and every voice in our communities. From our interactions with League leaders and members, from the results of a recent member survey, and based on the political outlook for the next two years, we believe that every League will likely continue to focus resources on the core democracy issues that are part of the 2014-2016 program. The LWVUS Board believes that our 2016-2018 program should recognize this reality and do the same. The opportunities that we see over the next biennium are as follows:

- Voting Rights and Voter Protection

In Congress, we must continue to push for restoration of the Voting Rights Act by supporting the bipartisan Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA). We must continue to support positive reforms such as online voter registration for all, portable voter registration within each state, and reforms to provisional voting, areas for which there are already pending bills. We must continue pushing this administration and the next to comply with the National Voter Registration Act by allowing voters to register through the federally-facilitated health care exchanges.

- Money in Politics

Congress can take action to reform money in politics. Including the Stop Super PAC-Candidate Coordination Act in the House, there is legislation on each of the three pillars of our work on campaign finance: disclosure, stopping Super PACs, and public financing of congressional and presidential elections. There is also an anti-bundling bill. In addition, Congress can and must ensure meaningful enforcement of existing and future laws. The Federal Election Commission can't fix itself, but Congress surely can. These reforms can be made despite recent decisions of the Supreme Court.

Continued next page

Program Planning continued

- Supporting Voting Rights and Voter Protection in the States

In the states the fight continues in statehouses and courthouses to prevent legislation that suppresses the vote. Support also continues for reforms like on-line voter registration and expansion of early voting. These efforts are most successful when state Leagues can rely on LWVUS for resources in the form of shared expertise and coordination of strategies and messaging. State Leagues play a critical role, too, in developing partnerships and coalitions to protect the vote, not only in state legislatures but also in local communities. Collaborating with LWVUS, state Leagues take the leading role in advocacy for voter protection but also in coordinating statewide campaigns around voting issues.

- Supporting Voting Rights and Voter Protection in Local Communities

In recent years local League voter service has joined the front lines of voter protection. The 2016 election will be the first presidential election in 50 years in which voters cannot rely on the protections of the Voting Rights Act to ensure free and fair access to the polls. Never has a local presence – real people in real communities – been a greater asset for the League. Registering voters in underserved communities, high schools, community colleges, and at naturalization ceremonies has become the primary focus of our voter service work. Long-standing relationships with elections officials have already produced good results in preventing careless or not so careless decisions regarding precinct locations and distribution of polling place resources in the wake of the Shelby decision. More is required. It is critical that, in this upcoming election, we promote and support a local presence in our most vulnerable communities by working together with community partners and using our 95 years of election experience to protect voters in the next election.

- Voting Rights and Voter Protection Following Election 2016

The past five years have shown that elections have important consequences for both candidates and voters. Long lines at the polls in 2012 prompted the president to appoint the Presidential Commission on Election Administration to examine best election practices from the perspective of voter experience. The resulting recommendations provide an excellent road map for election reform at state and local levels. The League and our partners will be on the ground next November, but our election observations are meaningless unless we take them back to the appropriate decision makers.

Election 2016 will be the most expensive in our history. The issue of money in politics does not end the day after an election, nor is it confined to federal elections or the federal government. Leagues are working hard to update our campaign finance reform position, and it is incumbent on all of us to work at every level of government to ensure that power is in the hands of the many and not the few.

Redistricting reform continues to be a goal for the League. Armed with a position every state League can use, we look forward to more robust efforts to accomplish this goal. LWVUS will provide both venues for coordination and expert assistance. Progress has been made already, but League-wide support can strengthen the effort.

In addition, given the current political climate, there will likely be continued calls to amend the U.S. Constitution through a convention. The lessons learned through our study of the amendment process will inform LWV's education and advocacy in this area.

In providing input, we ask that your central focus be on where the League should put its energies and resources in the coming biennium. Consider:

- In what way can the League best empower citizens to shape a better nation and communities during the next two years?
- What do our communities and nation need from the League right now?
- Where can the League's strengths have the greatest impact?
- What program work would best help enhance the League's influence, credibility, visibility, and membership?

Program Planning continued

- Should the focus be that proposed by LWVUS: a nationwide League campaign: Making Democracy Work, taking the power from the few and returning it to the many, as the single focus for LWVUS education and advocacy work in the 2016-2018 biennium? If the answer is “yes,” what specific activities should be included in the campaign? What kinds of training and assistance would enhance your League’s participation in the campaign?
- If your League would rather recommend another issue for education or advocacy as an alternative to the proposed focus, provide the details of your proposal, including a statement of the problem that needs to be addressed, an analysis of the unique role the LWV can play in helping resolve the issue, and a description of some of the specific activities the League could undertake on the issue.

Resource Considerations

In recommending a program item for 2016-2018, please be mindful of the resource commitments required for your own League, as well as for LWVUS. A recommendation is a request to make that item a high priority for the biennium at all the levels of League. If a recommendation is adopted, Leagues with limited resources—financial and volunteer—may find it necessary to drop other activities in order to participate.

Now that you know what National League would like us to consider, please come to one of our planning meetings in February and give your input. All members are welcome at any of the meetings. If the one in your geographic area is not convenient, feel free to come to a different one, and even cross a river! We normally do these as a potluck – information will be coming out about the location for each and who to RSVP to if you are coming to the meeting.

We will be completing a Response Form (the questions follow) after our planning meetings in February to give input to National League for the 2016-2018 biennium. Please think about your answers and either come to the planning meetings in February or if you are not able to attend, forward your answers to me at: mamula159@hotmail.com

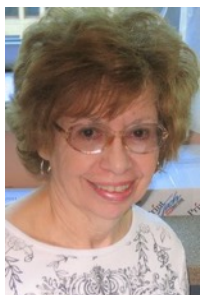
1. Do you support the proposed program focus, Making Democracy Work, for the 2016-2018 biennium? (Yes/No)
2. Would you like to recommend another program item, in addition to or instead of Making Democracy Work? (Yes/No)

Please provide a statement (300 words or less) describing the scope of your proposal, including a description of the issue area, its importance in advancing the League’s mission and resources that would be required.

3. What LWVUS positions does your League use to take action at the state and local level?
4. Comment Section—Optional comments (300 words or less) may be added here.

Hope to see you at one of our meetings in February!

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS by Judy Donohue



A long standing custom of local Leagues is to meet their legislative representative each winter. This can be done with a luncheon, visit to their office or a meet-up in a coffee shop. LWVGP chooses to visit each representative for a half hour or so to chat at their local office. This approach usually yields candor and builds relationships. LWVPA provides us with the questions and reply forms, and they are due back by March 1.

We are scheduling right now for Jan/Feb visits. Many have already been assigned but we invite you to either go along with already assigned member, take a friend and do your own or get on the waiting list for an assignment next year. Contact Judy Donohue for this opportunity 412-373-8697 or jrdono71@gmail.com.

NEWS FROM NATIONAL by Carol Walton



LWVUS is gearing up for its emphasis on the 2016 Presidential Election and voting rights in general. As a result of additional grant funding, outreach of and access to the VOTE411.org voter information source for voters will be expanded.

LWVUS has also submitted an amicus brief in the Texas case *Evenwel v. Abbott* currently before the Supreme Court. At stake is a change in the criteria for drawing state legislative district lines based on the total number of voters rather than the total population. The League supports continuing to draw state legislative district lines on the basis of total population. A decision to change the criteria to total number of voters would impact nearly all states' current legislative district boundaries and would shortchange areas with a

high proportion of children and other unregistered voters. (Congressional districts would not be affected since the process for drawing those lines is specified in a different section of the Constitution.)

For more detail, see <http://lwv.org/blog/us-supreme-court-considers-idea-representation>.

Carol also sent the following from the newspaper she reads while in Florida:

COMPLIMENTS TO THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA

The following is part of a weekly column "Kudos & Kicks – Reviewing the good, the bad and the questionable" – reprinted with permission from the "Naples Daily News" January 9, 2016.

Kudos: Not only did the League of Women Voters of Florida push for the constitutional amendments to make sure the state's political districts are drawn fairly rather than for political gratification, the organization went to court when lawmakers missed the mark.

Now, the nonpartisan league also did the line drawings for legislators.

A Florida Senate redistricting plan created by Senate Republican leadership didn't satisfy the judge who was assigned to review whether the maps outlining 40 Senate districts were drawn without regard to politics. But the judge found acceptable a map submitted by the league and Common Cause Florida.

The map that gives Democrats and Republicans an equal shot at controlling the Florida Senate won't thrill GOP-dominated Southwest Florida. But state data shows Florida voter registration is 38 percent Democratic and 35 percent Republican, with the rest of minor party or no party affiliation.

Pamela S. Goodman, president of the League of Women Voters of Florida, said the court's decision supported standards put in place by voters in the constitution in 2010 "ending incumbent protection. 2016 will be a year of fair districts, better discourse and better elections because of the voters."

And because of the League of Women Voters, we'd add.

NEW MEMBERS

Caren Glotfelty
carenglot@gmail.com

Pat Howe
pehowe@outlook.com

Theresa Sinchak
tsinchak@yahoo.com

Jean H. Snodgrass
jean4sno@gmail.com

George Stewart
silentowl@verizon.net

Non-Fiction Book Club Selections

- February: *The Price of Justice: A True Story of Greed and Corruption* by Laurence Leamer
- March's choice will not be a specific book but articles and books on the subject of Human Trafficking – what ever is available.

The book club meets the third Friday of the month, 10:15 a.m. at the Squirrel Hill Library. Meetings are lively, informative and stimulating.

Contact Judy Donohue: 412-373-8697 or jrdono71@gmail.com.

HOW ARE YOUR LEAGUE DUES USED? by Eileen and John Olmsted



Each year we ask you to pay dues of \$60.00 to LWVGP. Where does the money go? How is it used? Why is every membership important?

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) receives \$32 to help finance its work as our “watch dog” at the national level. The state office in Harrisburg receives \$20 to keep similar watch at the Pennsylvania level. Our local League retains only \$8 of your dues. The reason for allocating the bulk of your dues to national and state League operations is that most of the issues about which Leaguers are passionate are either national or statewide in scope, meaning that Washington, DC and Harrisburg are where the League must maintain its highest profiles.

While \$32 per member and \$20 per member may seem like large amounts, dues meet less than 35% of the costs of operating the national and state offices. The National and State Boards have to raise additional money from grants or donations from members and other supporters.

LWVUS plays two essential roles. First, it deals with the national issues that concern League members. The staff of the national office and members of the National Board meet with key legislators, testify before Congressional Committees and lobby when needed on our current legislative priorities. In addition, LWVUS uses the lww.org website and social media such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate regularly with the public and press to make sure the League’s message is heard. Second, National provides logistical support to local and state Leagues, by offering webinars on a myriad of subjects, providing online training materials, and conducting workshops at state and national conventions.

The portion of dues that goes to the state League helps support its infrastructure, which includes rent, two office staff members and a part time bookkeeper. In return, LWVPA lobbies in Harrisburg on state issues on which the League has positions. An example of LWVPA’s work has been being the lead litigant in the year long lawsuit against the state’s Voter ID law. Another would be our active participation in coalitions that monitor legislative activities which impact our educational and environmental concerns. You can participate in these efforts by responding to calls to action from the State President which appear in your email box.

The \$8 of your dues that is kept by our local League is far from sufficient to cover the expenses of running an office and paying our part time staff member. In the past we have had fundraisers to make up the difference, and many of you help by making contributions when you pay your dues. In addition, local costs are kept low by the generous work done by our volunteers. Locally the Board coordinates the activities of various committees. Their work is featured at the monthly local area meetings that you are all urged to attend. With the invaluable help of Barbara Simpson, who staffs our office, we keep our membership and financial records up to date, publish the Facts for Citizens as well as the semi annual Voters’ Guides, maintain the LWVPA website and plan for our annual meeting.

Dues payments to LWV are not tax deductible because of the League’s lobbying activities, but we do have a separate Education Fund that is used explicitly for voters’ service activities such as the voter’s guides published twice a year and our online voters guide, Vote411. Contributions to this fund are fully tax deductible.

We know that many of you get requests for money from national (LWVUS) and state (LWVPA) as well as the occasional local appeal for contributions to the LWV Greater Pittsburgh. Your donations are important on all levels. Think of the organization as a three-legged stool, each leg being equally important. The League must act as our eyes, ears and voice at the local, state, and national levels. The three legs together comprise a unique grassroots organization that is respected and looked to for information about policy issues and voting. The League runs a tight fiscal ship at every level and applies repeatedly for grants to fund our education efforts, but in the end, all levels need extra help from the members to fund our efforts. You are free to decide how much you want to give, knowing how most of your local dues are being utilized.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT LEAGUE by Eileen Olmsted



In order to meet the challenges of 21st-century communication methods, the League conducts much of its business online by means of email, webinars, electronic pages, and social media. For instance, most of you are receiving this *Voter* through your email accounts. We also send out Email Blasts with the current week's calendar and program reminders and an occasional Action Alert forwarded from the state and national Leagues. We work hard to keep you informed, so please do read them.

If you would like to explore and learn more about how the League serves you and the community, here are a few ways in which you can use your own computer to keep up to date with your organization.

Locally, you can find The LWVGP calendar, the current and past Voters, important announcements etc. at <http://lwpvgh.org>. In addition, we maintain a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Greater-Pittsburgh-111204162227795/>. Go there now and like us. And if you tweet you can find us at <https://twitter.com/LWVGPittsburgh>.

LWVPA posts information at <http://www.palwv.org> and on its Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/palwv/>. You can help spread the word on the 2016 High School Video Contest on voting by going to the web page and forwarding the information about the contest to your local high school or teacher friend.

LWVUS has more than one website. The main one, the one that the public finds, is at <http://lww.org>. There is also a website to access the many different resources available to members that is accessed here at the <http://forum.lww.org> link. In addition, the League maintains an archive of League studies and position papers from all over the country at <https://sites.google.com/a/leagueofwomenvoters.org/clearinghouse/>.



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REPORT OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS
a joint effort of Annette Shimer, Preston Shimer and Sue Broughton

The Government Review Commission was established almost a year ago with the charge to review the Allegheny County Home Rule Charter established some 15 years ago. The Commission has nine members. See <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/commissions/government-review/about.aspx>. Some appointments were made by County Council and others by the Allegheny County Chief Executive. The Commission has three committees: Form of Government Committee; External Entities and Independently Elected Officials Committee; and Fiscal and Personnel Committee. These groups have met regularly and the League has been attending the public meetings. A final public hearing is being held on January 21, 6 pm in the Gold Room of the County Court House. There will then be meetings on January 26 and February 23 and a final meeting on March 29th at which final recommendations will be presented.

There are a number of proposed changes to the home rule charter under consideration including:

- The composition of County Council be changed from 13 members elected by district and 2 elected at large to 15 members elected by district and none elected at large.
- Redistricting. Recommended that the boundary lines for the County Council district be drawn by an impartial reapportionment commission similar to the one referenced in the Pennsylvania Municipal Reapportionment Act.
- Salaries:
 - County Council – change the pay from a stipend to a salary and indexed to the Consumer Price Index. It would go to \$9,450 from \$9,000 currently.
 - Chief Executive – Salary to be increased to \$117,108 and the salary also be indexed. Current salary for the Chief Executive is \$90,000 and has remained the same for the last 15 years. While no one objects to changing the compensation level, there are several proposed recommendations for how to keep salaries competitive in the future.
- The County Executive and Council members should not be a candidate for more than one County office at a time.
- The County Executive and Council members should not be required to resign in order to run for another office.
- Improved staffing levels for County Council
- Clarify the scope of the ACE Commission (Accountability, Conduct and Ethics), County Council to be empowered to **initiate investigations** and receive complaints, investigate and make recommendations concerning **alleged** violations. (Changes in bold). A seven-point statement of powers and duties is recommended for inclusion in the code.

The League Position on County Government

The adoption of the Home Rule Charter of Allegheny County in May 1998 fulfilled some of the 1969 League position on County Government. Others were achieved by the elimination of several row offices in May 2005. The position should be updated to reflect the 2005 changes. The position as it now stands is as follows:

County Government (1969, last updated 1999). Support for the County Home Rule Charter. Support of a change to reduce the number of row offices. Support of an operating budget drawn upon the basis of program planning. Support of continuing the practices of an internal pre-audit, a post-audit by an elected controller with additional regular post-audits by an outside agency, and an annual capital development program plan based on long-range goals. Election of the Controller and District Attorney should be continued. Most, if not all, other offices should be appointed with possible redefinition and consolidation of some of these positions. Printed copies of the proposed budget should be available to the public before budget hearings. Copies of the adopted budget should be available to the public. Maintain a continuing evaluation and monitoring of the county government for effectiveness and efficiency.

County Charter Commission Report continued

- Change the required review of each county department by the county manager to a staggered review to insure that one quarter of all departments are reviewed each year.
- The office of County Treasurer should continue to be an elected office.
- A series of administrative recommendations relating to:
 - o Research to determine the availability of funding for increased public safety training in the Sheriff's department
 - o Research to determine the advisability of a merger of County Sheriff's Office and County Police Department
 - o Improving operations of the County's Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program
 - o Centralized procedures for the deposit of cash receipts
 - o Creation of a County Bond Board (this item requires more work to become a recommendation)
 - o Requiring departmental self-reporting of Diversity information
 - o Research into affordable housing in Allegheny County

While some of the recommendations are significant and others aimed at general improvement, the requirement to have a thorough review of the Home Rule Charter every ten years is an important feature of our charter. There are also a few recommendations concerning the operation of this commission in the future.

Detail of all the recommendations is at

http://www.alleghenycounty.us/uploadedFiles/Allegheny_Home/Dept-Content/commissions/Government-Review/Draft-Recommendations-Public%20Hearing-20160121.pdf.

While this article will not reach you in time for the public hearing on January 21, we believe that the League could submit comments later. Your thoughts with respect to which changes to support will be appreciated.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT by Billie Girard

As we welcome in 2016, it is hard to believe that not much has changed in Harrisburg. We still do not have a state budget and it appears that an end to the process is not in sight.

There has been some relief for school districts. A partial state budget of \$30.3 billion budget was sent to Governor Wolf by House Republican majority leaders as an alternate to help struggling school districts, counties and social service agencies. Of those monies the governor has authorized \$23.4 billion in emergency funding. However, these monies only pay school districts through December.

On January 8, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) filed a lawsuit in Commonwealth Court to force the state to give the school districts the monies that have been withheld during the budget impasse. The PSBA has stated that its membership includes almost all of the state's 500 school districts. The suit also "claims that the state government has continued to operate essentially unimpeded by the lack of a budget while officials have withheld state and federal money from schools." In addition the lawsuit claims that "the continuity of public education is as important to the health, safety and welfare of the commonwealth as many of the other governmental programs and services that are being funded despite the budget impasse." The suit asks for release of state and federal monies as well as payment for the losses that districts have incurred in terms of interest on monies borrowed and investment income.

We can only hope that the state legislature and the governor realize that they were elected to serve the people of the Commonwealth and not their own special interests.

PITTSBURGH CITY COUNCIL SUPPORTS REDISTRICTING REFORM

Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak introduced and Pittsburgh City Council passed this “Will of Council.”

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania Senate Bill 484 proposes an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania which will assign redrawing congressional and legislative district boundaries to an independent redistricting commission, prohibit districts from being drawn for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against any political party or candidate, mandate strict compliance with constitutional anti-gerrymandering standards, guarantee meaningful opportunities for public input, and limit redistricting to just once during each decennial census cycle, and;

WHEREAS, current congressional and legislative redistricting is undertaken by a legislative reapportionment commission, comprised of people who have enormous political and personal interests in the outcome of the commission’s work, and;

WHEREAS, districts are often redrawn to optimize the probability for incumbents to stay in office and to disadvantage candidates of the opposing party, which diminishes competition and choice during elections, as well as accountability to the voters, and;

WHEREAS, only a truly independent commission composed of a politically diverse group of qualified members of the voting public, chosen to assure the fairness of the redistricting process, should be able to define congressional and legislative districts, and;



Councilwoman Rudiak reading her Will of Council supporting redistricting reform

WHEREAS, districts should not be drawn for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against any political party or candidate, and;

WHEREAS, the constitution should define the maximum allowable deviations from the requirements that district populations be equal in population, compact, and contiguous, as well as prohibit unnecessary splitting of political subdivisions, and require explanation in detail for any departures from any plan that would achieve the stated standards, and mandate that these rules shall be enforced by the commission and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and;

WHEREAS, there must be opportunities for the public to be involved with the commission through comments and public hearings throughout the commonwealth, and;

WHEREAS, redistricting should be permitted just once during each decennial census cycle, unless required by a court order.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh believes that our current system of districting has the potential to diminish meaningful choice during elections, diminish the accountability of elected officials to the voters, and jeopardize the democratic process as it leaves districting to partisan legislators instead of a diverse and representative sample of the people of The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh calls upon the Members of the Pennsylvania Senate and the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to vote for passage of Senate Bill 484 to amend the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and to do so in a timely manner so as to enable the amendment to be in full force for the 2021 redistricting of the Commonwealth’s congressional and legislative districts.