

# League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

# W V O T E R

Volume 23, No. 2

October 2016

## OCTOBER UNITS ARE A TWOFRER. COME AND HEAR ABOUT TWO GREAT LEAGUE EFFORTS.

We are starting the unit meetings off in October with two updates. We will be hearing at all three meetings from Nancy Naragon, who has headed up our Gun Safety initiative. She will let us know what we have accomplished and where we are headed next. Each unit meeting will also have a short presentation about redistricting, gerrymandering, cracking and packing (come find out what this means!). We are facing reapportionment after the 2020 census, and want to be knowledgeable citizens about how this affects us and Pennsylvania.

**Gun Safety in a Free Society:** The Gun Safety committee has been working for over two years toward a goal of reducing gun violence in Allegheny County. We wanted to change the conversation about guns from "you can't" to "we can do this—together."

Currently we are involved with WQED in a gun safety project as part of a new program they have called THINK! This program will debut Nov. 15th on WQED-TV, with some additional activities leading up to the 15th and some projects coming out of that event.

The League's October Unit Meetings will fill you in on what has been happening, who we have worked with, what we have learned, and what we envision as the Next Steps. We need your input! Come discover what we have learned, ask questions, add your comments, and help us develop some effective Next Steps.

### The Election Laws Study:

- ✓ Redistricting, gerrymandering, reform
- ✓ Should 49.5% of voters select 72% of the legislative seats?
- ✓ What is a sweetheart deal?
- ✓ Cracking, packing – what do these mean?
- ✓ Goofy kicking Donald? (What's this? You have to be there to find out!)
- ✓ Why is Pennsylvania on the redistricting radar for 2020? Do you think you should have a choice in the general election? One third of local congressional districts have no opposition this fall. Two thirds of the state senatorial races have no opposition. 74% of PA house candidates in Allegheny County have no opposition.

**Long-time League member, Marion Damick** was honored by the Jail Oversight Board for her work as a prisoner advocate. For 25 years, she has been a volunteer "official visitor" at the jail for the Pennsylvania Prison Society. She was awarded proclamations by the County Executive and County Council. Marion is also a former executive director of the ACLU.

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**DEBATES AND CANDIDATE INFO?!!**



**US Senatorial Debate:** LWVGP has been unable to set up a debate for the US Senatorial seat. A big thank you to WTAE for their offer, help, and persistence in organizing another quality program and an opportunity to hear each candidate respond to questions on the issues.

Katie McGinty campaign said, "it looks like we're not going to be able to get this debate on the schedule...". Senator Toomey's campaign finally said "the campaign has not determined or released a finalized debate schedule."

Both of these candidates have posted biographical information and answers to two questions on [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org)

**Members of Congress:** *12th Congressional District* – Keith Rothfus' campaign when asked responded, "My name is Blake Gober and I am the Communications Director for Keith Rothfus for Congress. I would like to thank you for your invitation to do a meet the candidate event in October. However, the Congressman will not be able to do that event as we have already filled out his calendar for those events. Once again, thank you for your invitation." For more information see campaign website, <http://www.keithrothfus.com/>

No information posted on [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org).

*12th Congressional District* – Erin McClelland – willing to debate. For more information see her

information and answers in [Vote411.com](http://Vote411.com) or campaign website, <http://www.erinforpa.com/meet-erin/>

I don't know of other events and frankly I don't have the willpower to ignore the pain that I will feel if I look. — *Last minute update. Breaking news: debate in 12th Congressional District. See page 7*

— Annette



**New citizens!** Natalya (pronounced Natasha) Sachivichik (right), a good friend and colleague of LWVGP board secretary Leagha Courtney, and Natalya's husband Alexey Sachivichik with the presiding judge after their naturalization ceremony. Leagha is very proud of her friends. We join in her joy.

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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.

VOTER Editor: Sue Broughton

Email: [info@pgh.lwv.org](mailto:info@pgh.lwv.org)

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**NON-FICTION BOOK CLUB SELECTIONS**

The book for **October** is *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* by Jane Mayer.

The books for **November** are choice of:

- *Confronting Capitalism: Real Solutions for a Troubled Economic System* by Philip Kotler, or
- *Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few* by Robert Reich

Book Club contact is Judy Donohue: 412-373-8697 or [jrdono71@gmail.com](mailto:jrdono71@gmail.com).

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<b>League Phone Numbers, Websites, and Social Media</b>			
Greater Pittsburgh	412-261-4284	<a href="http://lwvpgh.org">lwvpgh.org</a>	
Pennsylvania	717-234-1576	<a href="http://palwv.org">palwv.org</a>	
National	202-429-1965	<a href="http://lww.org">lww.org</a>	
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**Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network**  
 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
- Education
- Civil rights for immigrants

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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](mailto: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 [howardmcliii@comcast.net](mailto:howardmcliii@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](mailto:mamula159@hotmail.com)

### Other Ongoing Meetings

- ✓ **Education Committee**  
4th Wednesday. Contact Billie Girard at 412-531-6859 or [billiegirard202@verizon.net](mailto:billiegirard202@verizon.net)
- ✓ **Voter Service Committee**  
Dates TBD. Contact Annette Shimer at 412-221-5163 or [ashimer@gmail.com](mailto:ashimer@gmail.com)
- ✓ **Gun Safety Committee**  
Dates TBD. Contact Nancy Naragon at 412-366-2446 or [nancynaragon@msn.com](mailto:nancynaragon@msn.com)
- ✓ **Non-fiction Book Club**  
3rd Friday. Contact Judy Donohue at 412-373-8697 or [jrdono71@gmail.com](mailto:jrdono71@gmail.com)

## OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2016 CALENDAR

Sep. 30 Fri	Voter registration, 777 Penn Center Blvd., Bldg. 7, 12:30-3:30 p.m.
<b>October</b>	
04 Tue	Voter registration, CCAC West Hills, 10:30 a.m.
05 Wed	Voter registration, Braddock Carnegie Library. 11 a.m.
06 Thu	<b>South Hills Unit meeting: LWVPA Election Laws Study</b>
07 Fri	Naturalization & voter registration, Heinz History Center, 11:00 a.m.
10 Mon	Board meeting
11 Tue	<b>Last day to register to vote</b>
11 Tue	Voter registration, 777 Penn Center Blvd., Bldg. 7, 12:30-3:30 p.m.
14 Fri	<b>Pittsburgh Central Unit meeting: LWVPA Election Laws Study</b>
19 Wed	<b>North Hills Unit meeting: LWVPA Election Laws Study</b>
20 Thu	<b>YOUR VOTE SHOULD COUNT: <i>Why it doesn't and what you can do about it,</i> See page 5</b>
21 Fri	Naturalization & voter registration, Federal Courthouse, 10 a.m.
21 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 a.m.
26 Wed	Voter registration, 777 Penn Center Blvd., Bldg. 7, 12:30-3:30 p.m.
26 Wed	Education Committee meeting, Squirrel Hill Library, 1-3 p.m.
<b>November</b>	
03 Thu	<b>South Hills Unit meeting: LWVPA Election Laws Study</b>
08 Tue	<b>General Election; Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.</b>
11 Fri	<b>Pittsburgh Central Unit meeting: LWVPA Election Laws Study</b>
14 Mon	Board meeting
16 Wed	<b>Shale &amp; Public Health Conf., Pitt U. Club Ballroom, 9a.m.-5 p.m.</b>
16 Wed	<b>North Hills Unit meeting: LWVPA Election Laws Study</b>
18 Fri	Naturalization & voter registration, Federal Courthouse, 10 a.m.
18 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club, Squirrel Hill Library, 10:15 a.m.
24 Thu	Thanksgiving Day – Office closed





## Fair Districts PA



### **YOUR VOTE SHOULD COUNT: Why it doesn't, and what you can do about it.**

**A community conversation about democracy,  
redistricting reform, and fair elections---everyone welcome!**

#### **Hosted by Franco Harris**

and the League of Women Voters, Common Cause/PA, Black Political Empowerment Project, Pennsylvanians for Fair Elections, and FDP member organizations

**October 20, 2016, 7:00PM, at  
East Liberty Presbyterian Church  
116 S. Highland Ave. Parking: on street or behind Carnegie Library**

For more information, email [info@FairDistrictsPA](mailto:info@FairDistrictsPA),  
check our website at [FairDistrictsPA.com](http://FairDistrictsPA.com) or follow us  
at [www.facebook.com/fairdistrictspa](http://www.facebook.com/fairdistrictspa) or [@FairDistrictsPA](https://twitter.com/FairDistrictsPA)

Speakers at this event include:

- ✓ Tim Stevens, Chairman & CEO, the Black Political Empowerment Project
- ✓ Cyril Wecht, former Allegheny County Commissioner, Coroner & Medical Examiner
- ✓ Jim Roddey, former Allegheny County Executive, appearing by video
- ✓ LWVGP member Cynthia Grace Devine-Kepner
- ✓ Ellen Doyle, co-founder of Pennsylvanians for Fair Elections

**SEPTEMBER VOTER REGISTRATION** by Judy Clack, Co-chair, Voter Service



League volunteers have been very busy this month conducting Voter Registration at 15 different locations: Carnegie Downtown and Business Library, Community College of Allegheny County West Hills (twice), Federal Building (twice), Kraft Heinz Headquarters, Kraft Heinz Innovation Center, Lloyd D Hayden Community Center, McCandless Community Day, Naturalization Ceremony at Federal Courthouse in Pittsburgh, Naturalization Ceremony at USCIS in Monroeville, Pittsburgh Oliver Citywide Academy, Produce to People at Butler Farmers' Market, Produce to People at UPMC Southside, Start on Success with Pittsburgh Schools Handicapped High School Seniors, Thrival Innovation Festival, and Turtle Creek Senior Center.

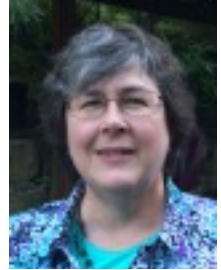
Twenty-eight League members, including several community volunteers, registered voters during September: Annette Buranosky, Louise Cannon, Judy Clack, Cynthia Grace Devine-Kepner, Phyllis Dreyfuss, Susanne Fox, Lois Goldstein, Dale Gregg, Bobbie Harley, Heather Harr, Frank Hynds, Becky Kretschmann, Mary Larsen, Maureen Mamula, Howard McIlvried, Shirley McIlvried, Lora Medwid, Sally Newman, Eileen Olmsted, Liz Perkins, Christine Peters, Rosemary Prostko, Annette Shimer, Barbara Simpson, Betty Wade, Mary Wroniak, and Sarah Zarrow. Warm thanks to each and every one of you.

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services office in Monroeville cancelled five naturalization ceremonies in September and October due to lack of applicants: Sept. 7, Sept. 21, Sept. 30, Oct. 11, and Oct. 26. League members, who had already volunteered to register the new citizens on those dates, were very disappointed. There are three naturalization ceremonies still on the calendar: Fri., Oct. 21 and Fri., Nov. 18 at the Federal Courthouse on Grant Street, and on Wed., Nov. 23 at the Monroeville site. Let me know if you are interested.

We will remain busy at registration events until the October 11 deadline for voter registration forms to be received. Look at the table below for late September and early October opportunities. Please contact me if you can help: [jbclack@yahoo.com](mailto:jbclack@yahoo.com) or 512-731-0280. I will email you a reminder with additional information. There will be at least one other person with you at each site. **The October 5 registration at the Braddock Carnegie Library is particularly urgent since it has just been received, and there are no volunteers as of this writing.**

09/29/16	Thurs.	9:45 am - 11:30 am	Oliver Citywide Academy, 17-18 year-old Special Education Students	Oliver Citywide Academy, (PGH Schools), 2323 Brighton Road, PGH, 15212
09/30/16	Fri.	10 am - 2 pm	Lloyd D. Hayden Community Center with Allegheny Family Network, parents	Lloyd D. Hayden Community Center, 480 Park Ave., Natrona Heights, PA 15065
10/04/16	Tues.	10:30 am - 1 pm	Allegheny Community College @ West Hills, students	CCAC West Hills, 1000 McKee Road, Oakdale, PA 15071 (Atrium)
10/04/16	Tues.	6:30 - 8:30 pm	Pittsburgh Job Corps Center, students	Pittsburgh Job Corps Center, 7175 Highland Dr., PGH 15206.
10/05/16	Wed.	11 am - 1:30 pm	Braddock Carnegie Library	Braddock Carnegie Library, 419 Library St., Braddock, PA 15104

## **REGISTERING STUDENTS** by Maureen Mamula, Director, Program



I went to a Pittsburgh Public Schools meeting held at Carnegie Library in Oakland. The audience was 38 students, with 4 aides/teachers also present. The students are all seniors and have an Individual Education Plan. The speaker before me was from Community College and was telling them about programs that will get them a certificate and a degree for various occupations in a 30-week course. She also mentioned the help they can get from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for attending college.

The room had a computer and projector, so I was able to show them on **votesPA** how to find their polling place (one student volunteered his address), and told them the closest place is not always where you vote – check it out ahead of time. I also covered the primary vs general election and how all elections are important, especially with our primary system in PA (gave examples). We also looked at the County elections website and I explained how the ballot will be available here later, so they can look at it before going to the polls. We also watched the video that is on the site and paused it to reinforce that you can go back, don't have to vote for the total number of available positions, etc. Spoke a bit about how the people who decide whether their street gets paved, whether it gets plowed in the winter, and the people who decide what goes on in schools, whether help is available for job training, etc. are all elected – by all of us – and that is why all elections are important. Reminded them it will be a few weeks before they get their voter cards.

Most of the students are not 18 and won't be before the election. One volunteered that he is already registered to vote (lots of praise from me and the teachers), and I got 6 registrations. The other students filled out forms and took them home – one will be sending it in with a teacher's help after he gets his ID or SS number (did not have it with him today). I told the others that they can complete them at home and mail them in when they turn 18. I also touched briefly on absentee ballots and emphasized the date they have to be back at the county. I also reminded them that the people at the polls/polling place will help them and explain the machine again if they need that – that I see people frequently getting this help, even people older than me!

## **VOTING MACHINE PREPARATION** by Louise Cannon, Co-chair, Voter Service

On September 9, I witnessed the preparations for the voting machines for the coming elections on the behalf of the LWV of Greater Pittsburgh to see that the machines were properly prepared. The LWV can state that it “has among its purposes concern with all aspects of the voting process including detecting, and preventing election fraud, and prosecuting it where necessary” – a requirement of the Elections Division for observing voting machine preparation.

My role in this process was to randomly select 21 voting machines to go through a screening process that included a machine for vision-impaired voters. These machines were then taken to an office where they went through a comprehensive examination of the machines, witnessed by 3 people who were not employees of the Elections Division of Allegheny County. The GRP consultant was Geoffery Pollich and representing the Elections Division was John O'Brien.

**Just Announced: Debate in the 12th Congressional District** (Not LWV sponsored)

Thursday, October 6th

Doors Open at 6:30pm, Debate Begins at 7:00pm

Penn State-Beaver Auditorium, Student Union Building

100 University Dr

Monaca, PA 15061

## CIVIC SALON DIGS INTO ISSUES by Brianna Horan, Director, Civic Salon

*Salon [noun]: (historical) A regular social gathering of eminent people (especially writers and artists) at the house of a woman prominent in high society.*

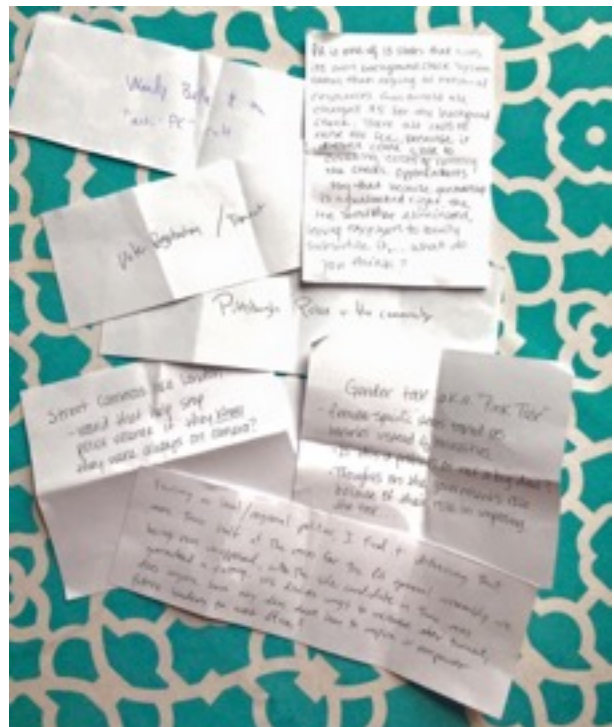
The Civic Salon of Pittsburgh welcomes any and all who enjoy friendly and passionate discourse that brings together the voices of the city. In our gatherings we take #trending topics offline for candid, face-to-face discussions that explore the human impact behind the hashtags. Our meeting venues are typically at restaurants, coffee shops and universities around the city rather than the homes of high society women, but the Civic Salon is hosted by the legendary League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh. It aims to engage with young professionals and college students interested in voter education and participation. Like the League, the Civic Salon is open to all genders and is non-partisan – one need not be a League member to attend a Salon gathering.

Our first meeting in April 2016 focused on Gender Equality, and was hosted at Chatham University. Ellen Doyle, a board member of the Women’s Law Project, provided riveting and riling facts about the history, progress and realities of this topic, especially as they pertain to Pennsylvania citizens.

We decided to narrow our focus on this topic in our May meeting, hosted at Mansions on Fifth in Shadyside, to address Gender Equality in the Workplace. Lee Fogarty of the Zonta Club of Pittsburgh joined us to talk about the grassroots efforts in Pittsburgh to make Pittsburgh a CEDAW city – one that abides by the Convention to End all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The U.S. is one of only 7 countries (along with countries like Sudan and Iran) that have not signed this U.N. treaty in support of women’s rights. Salon members also shared personal anecdotes and strategies of their own professional experiences.

July saw our third meeting on the porch of Biddle’s Escape coffee shop in Wilkinsburg for “Hot Topics and Hot Drinks.” Members wrote down topics of interest to them, and we had a group discussion on each for fifteen minutes. The topics of the evening: Pittsburgh police and community relations // How to inspire future leaders to run for office // Wendy Bell and “anti-PC” culture // Would street cameras make a difference in police violence? // Financing of gun background checks in PA // Gender tax – higher prices on “pink” products // How to increase voter registration and participation.

Our August meeting took us to The Brew Gentlemen in Braddock for Brews & Views, and followed a similar format as our previous gathering. This time we discussed: How to impact environmental issues and climate change on a local/individual level // Impact of the Olympic games on Rio’s poverty // Coverage of women in the Rio Olympics // Wendy Bell’s independent journalism and case against WTAE // Responses to Pittsburgh Chief of Police Cameron McLay’s speech at the Democratic National Convention // The media’s coverage and legitimization of Trump vs. that of climate change.



*Continued next page*



*Civic Salon, continued from previous page*

We'll gather next on the rooftop patio deck of Mario's East Side Saloon in Shadyside on Sunday, October 9 from 6 – 8 p.m. This meeting is especially focused on engaging college students and introducing them to the Civic Salon, but all are welcome to attend.

We'll have some free pizza, and Mario's has great drink specials on Sunday evenings. The timing puts us right between the Steelers game and the Presidential Candidate Debate that evening. We'll be doing some last-minute voter registration, and attendees can also test their legislative knowledge with a quiz that evening. We'll have some conversation starters about current events and issues around the room to stoke conversation and encourage mingling. Please feel free to attend and bring a friend, or share the details with someone who might be interested in attending – hoping to see lots of new faces in attendance!



## News from State and National by Carol Walton

The **League of Women Voters of the United States** is focusing its efforts on voting and on the upcoming General Election. LWVUS is supporting and encouraging voter registration drives by local Leagues around the country and providing information on voter registration and voting on the website ([www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)). They are also encouraging the use of [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org) for information on voting and on candidates.

Also on the LWVUS website is a debate watching kit which includes helpful suggestions for hosting a debate-watching party and guidelines for judging a candidate based on what he or she says and does during the debate. We are strongly encouraged to watch the debates and glean as much helpful information as possible.

On the judicial front, a federal appeals court blocked the action of Brian Newby, U.S. Election Assistance Commission Executive Director who had previously allowed Alabama, Georgia and Kansas to require voters to produce difficult-to-obtain proof of citizenship documentation when completing the federal mail voter registration form. LWVUS was a plaintiff in the case.

The **League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania** is also focusing on voter registration leading up to the General Election. The website ([www.palwv.org](http://www.palwv.org)) provides resources for voters on registration and voting and a link to VOTE411 for information on candidates as well as more general information for voters.

You received the LWVPA VOTER electronically a short time ago. It features a description of our new Criminal Justice position which resulted from our study last year. The other feature is the upcoming review and update of our position on Election Laws.





**The Straight Scoop on Shale Drilling**  
A PROJECT OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF PENNSYLVANIA CITIZEN EDUCATION FUND

## **2016 Shale & Public Health Conference**

**November 16, 2016, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

University of Pittsburgh University Club, 123 University Place,  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

*Presented by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania's "Straight Scoop on Shale" initiative and hosted by the Pitt Graduate School of Public Health.*

**APPROVED FOR 8 HOURS FOR NURSING CE's AND CPHCEU's**  
through Mid Atlantic Regional Public Health Training Center  
(More information coming soon on other professional disciplines)

### **Among the highlights of the conference:**

- **Eduardo (Jay) Olaguer, PhD** from Houston's HARC presenting research on benzene emissions from petrochemical plants, air quality and health in the Houston Ship Channel, and citizen air monitoring projects
- **Brian Schwartz, MD** of John Hopkins presenting new research on fracking and asthma, published this summer in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA Internal Medicine)
- A panel with two research studies on setback distances  
... and lots more!

### **More Information and Registration**

**Or call 1-800-61-SHALE**

You may also pass along this information to a friend or colleague who would be interested in attending.

#### **NEW MEMBERS**

Joyce Beard  
[joyfulecb@verizon.net](mailto:joyfulecb@verizon.net)

Cristina Beuger  
[cristina.beuger@gmail.com](mailto:cristina.beuger@gmail.com)

Bridget Clement  
[bclement@cispac.org](mailto:bclement@cispac.org)

Donna Heifer  
[donna@thehiebers.com](mailto:donna@thehiebers.com)

Kendra Strobel  
[kannstrobel@gmail.com](mailto:kannstrobel@gmail.com)  
(Student – Univ. of Pgh. School of Law)

Mary Wroniak  
[mwron29@gmail.com](mailto:mwron29@gmail.com)

## Death Penalty Nearing Death! by Hazel Cope

It ought to be anyway. In Pennsylvania alone, 58 people have been exonerated since 1989. Thankfully, Pennsylvania has a moratorium on executions at present so these victims of injustice were not executed. But some exonerations were post-execution, and many others spent decades in the harsh solitary confinement regime of a death row.



Here are a few cases:

- Mr. Jim Fogle spent 34 years in prison for a murder he did not commit. He was exonerated last year, but received no financial compensation for his suffering and he is now struggling to support himself. Meanwhile, the actual killer has been free and is perhaps still murdering.
- JUNE: Pennsylvania exonerated Crystal Weimer after 11 years in prison after the evidence against her was discredited.
- JULY: Kentucky reversed the 1995 murder conviction of two men based on new DNA and other evidence pointing to their innocence. They've each served over 20 years of life sentences.
- AUGUST: 3rd Circuit US Court of Appeal ruled that James Dennis was denied a fair trial. He has been on death row for 24 years.

A report from Harvard researchers showed how frequently former Philadelphia prosecutor Lynne Abrahams pursued the death penalty. Similar crimes would face different sentences in other PA cities. Nonetheless, Philly's crime rate was the highest.

The Delaware Supreme Court has ruled the death penalty to be unconstitutional, and the Connecticut Supreme Court reaffirmed its decision that abolition of the death penalty must also apply to those already convicted. In November, California voters will choose between two opposing referendums on the death penalty.

The Pennsylvania Innocence Project is opening an office at Duquesne University School of law. Students from both Duquesne and Pitt will earn college credit by examining the evidence in vetted cases.

And meanwhile, rumor has it that the Pennsylvania Study on Death Penalty which I've have been eagerly awaiting, convinced it must surely prove that DP is indefensible, is plodding its funeral way to conclusion. Watch this space.



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## EDUCATION ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORT

by Evelyn Murrin, Education Specialist, and Billie Gerard, Committee Chair

LWVGP's Education Advocacy Committee grew out of the momentum of the National LWV's study of the "Federal Government's Role in Education." It meets monthly to address new trends and issues in public education. Over past months we tackled a new world of schools changing in local communities and the State as well as emerging international influences.

In January we kicked off with Jeanne Diana's well-researched presentation on Charter Schools. Her study led to a greater awareness of the effects of "Privatization" on public schools. **The LWV of Pennsylvania's position aligns with the United States position:**

**The League believes that when governmental entities consider the transfer of governmental services, assets and/or functions to the private sector, the community impact and goals of such transfers must be identified and considered. Further, the LWV believes that transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good must be ensured.**

**Implications for the world?** A global debate ensues as privatized education grows. According to investigative reports, the over-arching concern is that the expansion of low-fee private schooling and other competitive practices will lead to a large number of the world's most vulnerable children who *have no hope of receiving free, quality education.* The United Nation's Human Rights Council adopted a resolution calling for monitoring all private education providers. State Auditor General Eugene DePasquale's recent report calls for reform of PA's 20-year-old Charter School law, citing gray areas primarily in Cyber Charters. However, he has said that his call is not an indictment of all charters.

We also heard reports on Common Core Standards; The Gates Foundation's efforts to address Teacher Effectiveness; controversies over teacher evaluation, tenure policies, and retention of newer teachers; "Community Schools;" volunteers as vital to parent education, involvement, and community engagement; the effects on students of extended "Testing" as an accountability measure as well as a distraction from classroom instruction – all caught the attention of a wider group of stakeholders. Coming up, we will consider Early Childhood Education; ESSA: Every Student Succeeds Act – what will the new State Assessment system look like?; continued understanding of the American Legislative and Education Council in state legislatures; the Dolly Parton Project's "A Book for Every Child."

Throughout the year we followed the 9-month budget impasse that seriously affected PA School Funding.

In May, House Bill 1552, The Fair Funding Formula for Basic Education, was passed and signed into law by Governor Wolf. This law will provide more equitable funding, which in turn should address the achievement gaps "according to race, ethnicity, economic status and parent education" giving all student a "chance at academic success." The 2016-17-education budget has provided for a 200-million dollar increase over last year in the basic education subsidy to be distributed according to the new funding formula. These funds will bring us to a total of 6.15 billion dollars for basic education subsidies. In addition there is 30-million dollar increase for early childhood education and a 20-million dollar increase for special education. This is a start, but more monies are needed for students to be able to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We welcome new members to the Committee to join Billie Girard, Jeanne Diana, Francis Hynds, Phyllis Dreyfuss, Caryl Beal, Cynthia-Grace Devine-Kepner, Barbara Gerhard Jones, Marcia Bandes, Meryl Lazar, Lois Goldstein, Joan Gaul, Carol Emerson, Eileen Olmstead, Judy Donohue, and Evelyn Murrin.