



VOLUME 29, No. 1

SEPTEMBER 2022

PROGRAM – SEPTEMBER KICK-OFF MEETING

The fall Kick-Off is set for *Thursday, September 29, from 6:30-9 pm*. We are meeting in person at the Blackridge Civic Association located at 1200 Beulah Road, Churchill, PA 15235 (parking lot available). This is a great opportunity to meet other members from our League and hear from the Board about our programs, voter registration, civic education, volunteer opportunities and events for the coming year. Please use this link to register or register on our website lwvpgh.org on the event calendar: https://lwvpgh.org/content.aspx?page_id=4002&club_id=554754&item_id=1780023

We will have light refreshments from 6:30 - 7 (cookies, coffee, tea and lemonade) followed by a panel discussion featuring Emilie Rzotkiewicz, the Stewardship Coordinator with the Allegheny Land Trust and Ken Balkey from the Churchill Tree Committee. Emilie and Ken will talk about the work the Allegheny Land Trust and the Churchill Tree Committee are doing to preserve and protect green spaces and tree canopy to provide recreational opportunities and preserve environmental integrity within their communities.

If you prefer, you may come just for the panel discussion. Weather permitting, we will open the doors to the building to provide air circulation. We encourage all who attend to wear a mask and be vaccinated.

We encourage you to consider sharing a ride and carpooling. If you want to use public transportation, please visit the Pittsburgh Regional Transit website at <https://www.portauthority.org/> (formerly the Allegheny County Port Authority). The 67 Bus (Downtown to Monroeville) and the P16 bus (Penn Hills Flyer) both stop at the intersection of Beulah Rd and Wm Penn Highway, very near to the Beulah Church Park and Ride. We can shuttle you to the program from there.

Contact Michele Knoll at president@lwvpgh.org, Judy Diorio at member@lwvpgh.org, or Barbara Grabowski at program@lwvpgh.org if you have questions, need more information, or to arrange a lift from the Park and Ride.

Learn about our Speakers: Emilie joined the Allegheny Land Trust (ALT) in 2010 as the Stewardship Coordinator. She now manages ALT's land assets and directs the stewardship department in their care and management of the land. With an undergrad degree in biology from Denison University and a Master's Degree in Forest Resources from Penn State University, Emilie is equipped with the right knowledge for the job. With past work experience in the public, private, and non-profit sector of land conservation, Emilie develops and implements multi-disciplinary natural resource management programs and strategies that address the diverse natural lands of southwestern PA. Growing up in rural Pennsylvania, Emilie appreciates what the outdoors provides to children, adults and all other creatures. Emilie resides in the North Hills of Pittsburgh and can often be found exploring ALT green spaces with her family and dog. Her favorite ALT conservation area is Fern Hollow, for this is where her husband Matt took her for their second date!

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Ken Balkey chairs the Churchill Borough Tree Committee whose goals are to educate the community on the benefits of maintaining and enhancing the trees of the Borough; monitor the status of trees in public spaces; and advise the Borough Manager and Borough Council on improvements, violations, and corrections appropriate to assuring the environmental benefits of a vibrant tree population. Ken is also engaged in Woodland Hills School District Climate Action efforts and interfaces with Tree Pittsburgh, the Allegheny Land Trust, members of shade tree commissions for other Allegheny County municipalities, and with local, state, and federal officials.

Ken served in senior leadership positions in ASME (The American Society of Mechanical Engineers) on engineering safety standards and certification efforts supporting many industries worldwide. He now serves on the ASME Philanthropy Committee with focus on endowing engineering scholarships. He retired in 2014 as a Consulting Engineer at Westinghouse Electric Company with 42 years of service in the global nuclear power industry. He has authored over 150 publications, holds two patents, and has received awards from ASME, Westinghouse, and other institutions. Ken earned B.S. and M.S. degrees in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh in 1972 and 1980, respectively, and is a registered professional engineer in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He is an adjunct faculty lecturer delivering a graduate course, "Case Studies in Nuclear Codes and Standards," in Pitt's Swanson School of Engineering since January 2010. He is an avid runner and one of 21 Perfect Great Racers.

Upcoming Programs: We have a new Program Chair, Barbara Grabowski, who is putting together speakers and programs for 2022 and 2023. Our next program is on October 6, from 7-8:30, via Zoom, and will focus on Election Integrity. Please use the following link to register or register on our website lwvpgh.org in the event calendar: https://lwvpgh.org/content.aspx?page_id=4002&club_id=554754&item_id=1780069.

We want to know what issues and topics are of interest to our members so we will be sending out a survey before the Kick-off Meeting. Please complete it when you have time; the survey will help us plan our speakers and presentations. We look forward to seeing you in person at our Kick-Off on September 29th.

NEW MEMBERS

North Hills

Abigail Carlin
acarlin0103@yahoo.com

Christina Kralic
ckralic@gmail.com

Dana Casale
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Christine Iksic
ciksic@gmail.com

Eloise V Peet
eloisevirgin@gmail.com

South Hills

Leslie J. Smith
No email

Pittsburgh Central

Thelma L. Herlich
tlherlich@comcast.net

Dona Albert
dona.albert@yahoo.com

Hannah Diorio -Toth
hdt2007@verizon.net

Chris Collins
ctc136@gmail.com

Melinda Pietrusza
No email

Kristina Ruane
No email

HOME RULE CHARTER AMENDMENT ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT

by Annette Shimer

Hidden on your ballot this fall is a referendum question which, if adopted, would change requirements for elected Allegheny County Council members who want to run for another elected position. Currently, a council member must resign before becoming a candidate for another office. If the amendment is approved, a member would be able to continue to serve while running for a different elected position in the county.

The Allegheny County Government Review Commission which looked at the entire Home Rule Charter recommended this change. Lower elected positions are frequently stepping stones for higher level positions. Apparently, this change has been on the ballot twice previously.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PROTECTING ABORTION ACCESS



The League of Women Voters strongly supports a woman's autonomy over her body. We assert that any person must have control over their well being and self-determination. As such, the **National President of the League Women Voters Dr. Deborah Ann Turner states:**

"We will use our anger to fight in the legislatures, in the courts, and in the streets. We call on our elected leaders at the state and federal levels to act swiftly to restore bodily autonomy to all people.

"We will not stand by as constitutional rights are stripped away, one by one.

"We hold the power to create a more perfect democracy. Women's rights are human rights, and we will continue to fight until the right to abortion is restored. Our lives depend on it."

Our state League of Women Voters statement:

"The passage of Senate Bill 106 is emblematic of how broken the legislative process in Harrisburg is. Legislative leaders manipulated procedural rules to ram through a bill with multiple contentious topics late in the day, just before summer recess, with no public hearings, no genuine minority party input, and little opportunity for the public to engage or even see what was taking place.

"The League of Women voters believes that there is no equality without reproductive rights. Banning abortion would have immediate and dire consequences on Pennsylvanians' lives and would

disproportionately harm people of color and low-income communities.

"While this bill has passed the state legislature, it still has a long way to go before it is implemented. We applaud Governor Wolf's Executive Order, which will ensure that out-of-state residents may enter Pennsylvania to access reproductive health care services.

"Remember, abortion is currently still legal in Pennsylvania, and we will continue to fight to protect all Pennsylvanians' reproductive rights."

WHAT IS SB106?

SB106, which recently passed the Pennsylvania's Senate and House of Representatives, would ask voters to declare that there is no right to an abortion in Pennsylvania and would ban abortions funded by tax dollars. This bill represents a serious threat to Pennsylvanians' ability to make decisions about their own reproductive health. ***In addition to the anti-abortion measures in the bill, SB106 would also allow for gubernatorial candidates to pick their Lieutenant Governor and would impose stricter voter-ID requirements in the Commonwealth, making it harder for Pennsylvanians to vote.***

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR SB106?

SB106 passed the state House and Senate. In order to be implemented, the amendment must pass two consecutive sessions of the General Assembly. The amendment will then be placed on the ballot for voters to vote on. Constitutional amendments like SB106 do not need the Governor's signature, and the Governor cannot veto these amendments.

Having passed in the current session, 2021-2022, SB106 must to pass again in the 2023-2024 session. The goal of its sponsors is to have it passed very early in 2023 so that it can be placed on the ballot in the May primary, a year in which local elections are held and voter interest and turnout is low.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT ABORTION ACCESS IN PENNSYLVANIA?

- **Learn how to be an activist:** Join the [ACLU People Power](#)'s Abortion Activist Series, a collection of virtual events and trainings on how you can join the fight for abortion rights, no matter where you live.

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

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President's Message, continued from previous page

- **Sign the Fix Harrisburg Petition:** The closed-door process that allowed this bill to pass is a clear example of the broken lawmaking process in Pennsylvania. Sign and share the [Fix Harrisburg petition](#).
- **Talk to your friends and family about abortion rights, and why it's important to vote 2022:** Who we elect next, and their stance on abortion, will have implications for abortion access in Pennsylvania for years to come. Register to vote in November at [vote.pa.gov](#). Organize a voter registration drive in your neighborhood to help get out the vote on this issue.
- **Tell your U.S. Senators to support abortion access:** Contact [Senator Bob Casey](#) and [Senator Pat Toomey](#) to ask them to protect abortion rights.
- **Call your State lawmakers to support abortion access:** Make your voice heard in Harrisburg. Contact your State Representative and State Senator to let them know you support equitable abortion access.
- **Don't give up.** The right to choose should have never been up for debate. Everyone deserves access to safe and legal abortions. And we encourage you to join us until that is the reality in Pennsylvania and across the United States.

Our Local League of Greater Pittsburgh continues to support a woman's right to reproductive rights.

Michele Knoll, President

LOOK FOR YOUR NEXT LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL IN YOUR EMAIL

by Preston Shimer, 1st VP Administration and Treasurer



Effective July 1st, our league began sending renewal payment notices via email using our Club Express system. Our membership system changes your status to "Expired" if the renewal is not received by your expiration date. To avoid this from happening, the first email renewal notice is sent 60 days before expiration, the second email is sent 30 days before. These email messages make it easy to click the pay by credit card button when it is received. Another way to pay is to go to [lwvpgh.org](#), click Member Login and follow the prompt to pay your membership.

Those members who have not provided us with an email address will receive a membership invoice by US Mail generated by the Club Express system. However, this is the only invoice you will receive. We will be monitoring payments and will attempt to contact everyone who does not renew because every member is valued and the non-payment may be because you need help.

Why the changes? Formerly, our office manager prepared an invoice package consisting of a printed renewal letter, an invoice and a return self-addressed envelope which was sent to each member 90 days before their expiration date. After the hard copy mailing, follow-up emails were sent. The process was labor-intensive, and many times required two first class stamps to mail. In recent years, a significant majority of our members chose to pay by credit card, often in response to the emails. As Treasurer, it was clear that using credit cards for payment was very popular and their use significantly reduced our costs. Hence the change in policy. However, if any member needs help with this change, please contact our [office manager](#) or [me](#) for assistance.

LEAGUE MEETING STRUCTURE

Board Meetings

- ✓ **Second Monday** of the month.. Meeting: 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., currently by Zoom.

Local Area Unit Meetings

- ✓ **Pittsburgh Central:** Currently not meeting. Contact Martha Raak at 412-477-7572 or marbiker1@gmail.com
- ✓ **North Hills:** Currently not meeting. Contact Nancy Mott at 412-779-3089 or namott001@gmail.com
- ✓ **South Hills:** Currently not meeting. Contact Maureen Mamula at 412-760-9642 or mamula159@hotmail.com

Other Ongoing Meetings

- ✓ **Education Committee**
1st Wednesday by Zoom.
Chair is Kathy Nagle,
education@lwvpgh.org or
1-814-241-8149
 - ✓ **Voter Service Committee**
1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 12:30 pm.
by Zoom. Additional meetings
occasionally added as needed.
Chair is Judy Clack at
512-731-0280
voterservice@lwvpgh.org
 - ✓ **Advocacy Committee**
3rd Monday by Zoom.
Chair Michele Knoll
412-389-1387
advocacy@lwvpgh.org
 - ✓ **Gun Safety Committee**
Currently not meeting.
Contact Nancy Naragon at
412-366-2446 or
development@lwvpgh.org
 - ✓ **Non-fiction Book Club**
3rd Friday, 10:15 am. Meeting
place determined each month,
see calendar. Contact Joan
Cucinotta, 412-708-2335 or
joancucinotta@gmail.com
- This column will be updated
as in-person meetings become
possible or changes in League
programming are made.

Late August-October Calendar

August

30 Tue	11 am-2 pm, Voter registration, Duquesne University Activities Fair on Activities Walk
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September

6 Tue	Voter Service Committee meeting, 12:30-2:30 pm on Zoom
7 Wed	Voter registration, 11 am-1 pm, LaRoche University Activities Fair
10 Sat	Voter registration, 8:15-11:30 am, Out of Darkness Walk for Suicide Prevention, Highmark Stadium - Station Square
12 Mon	Board meeting, 12:30 pm, on Zoom
16 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club meeting, Anderson Shelter
17 Sat	Voter registration, 8:30 am-1 pm, Pittsburgh Recovery Walk, 1201 Waterfront Place
19 Mon	Voter registration, 11 am-2 pm, Duquesne University Gumberg Library
20 Tue	Voter registration, various times, National Voter Registration Day , at select Carnegie Public Library branches TBA.
20 Tue	LWVPA Government Policy Update, 7:00-8:00 pm. Register to watch here . Updates are held the third Tuesday of each month.
24 Sat	Voter registration, 11 am-3 pm, Coraopolis Community Block Party, Shelley Y. Jones Memorial Park, Coraopolis.
27 Tue	Voter registration, 9:15 am-12:15 pm, Senior Resource Fair for seniors and their caretakers
29 Thu	Kick-off meeting for the League year, from 6:30-9 pm. In person at the Blackridge Civic Association

October

1 Sat	Voter registration, Noon-3:00 pm, Blawnox Fall Festival, Blawnox Community Park,
6 Thu	Program on Election Integrity , 7-8:30, on Zoom
8 Sat	Voter registration, 9 am-1 pm, Swissvale Farmers Market
10 Mon	Board meeting, 12:30 pm, on Zoom
17 Tue	LWVPA Government Policy Update, 7:00-8:00 pm. Register to watch here . Updates are held the third Tuesday of each month.
21 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club meeting, location TBD

VOTER SERVICE REPORT by Judy Clack, Voter Service Chair



Voter Service Committee Meeting. Tues. Sept. 6, 12:30 – 2:30 pm on Zoom.

Hear a Legislative Update of proposed PA laws impacting voters and tour updates to our website. Learn about and consider helping with voter education outreach to senior subsidized housing units, food pantries, faith-based institutions, colleges, high schools, incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals, farmers markets, libraries, public access TV, voters' guides, and candidate forums. Contact Judy Clack, voterservice@lwvpgh.org, for agenda and Zoom link, or to express interest in any of these endeavors. Zoom link is also on the Member Calendar on the LWVPGH website. All members are welcome.

Poll Worker Training and Application

Poll workers are democracy's essential workers! Working the polls is a wonderful way to get involved in your community and to protect Pennsylvania elections. The nonpartisan Committee of Seventy is sponsoring online training for poll workers. These one-hour workshops are scheduled on multiple dates in September and October at noon or 7:30 pm. Each session will cover the basics of working the polls across the Commonwealth. It is perfect for first-time poll workers or experienced poll workers who wants to brush up on their knowledge.

- [Sign up for](#) "So you want to be a poll worker?" Find the date that works best for your schedule.
- [Apply here](#) to be a Poll Worker in Allegheny County.
- [Learn more](#) about upcoming poll worker Q&A's, training sessions from LWVPA.

Mail-In Ballot Protected for Now

SpotlightPA, August 2, 2022, reported the following:

"The state Supreme Court has upheld Pennsylvania's mail ballot law, preserving for the time being a popular voting method that passed the legislature with bipartisan support but was later challenged by Republican elected officials. In a 5-2 decision released Tuesday, the justices rejected the GOP argument that the legislature did not have the power under the state constitution to allow Pennsylvanians to vote by mail without an excuse."

"Republican elected officials who brought the suit said Tuesday that they plan to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. ... The timeline to resolve the additional legal challenges is unclear. ... The Pennsylvania Department of State, which oversees voting, said Tuesday's decision 'assures eligible Pennsylvanians can vote by mail-in ballot in the Nov. 8 general election.'"



Voter Registration Events

From March 2020 – March 2022, the LWVPGH barely conducted any voter registration events. We resumed in April 2022 and are back now full force! The Voter Registration Committee scheduled sixteen voter registration activities from July 1 – September 30, with twelve upcoming ones listed on the next page. We have had a great response from League members volunteering to cover these events. A warm thank you to you all! Additional opportunities will be announced in the Blast, including more Farmers Markets in October. Email me, Judy Clack, at voterservice@lwvpgh.org, if you'd like to volunteer for any of these. Complete training details as well as those for location and parking will be emailed to you.

In-person, outdoor voter registration has resumed for our League. Volunteering at Aspinwall's Big Night Out on August 11 were (left to right) Joanne Brado, Elizabeth Voltz, Nancy Heastings, and Ellie Siegal. Not pictured was enthusiastic chair Mary Molloy. On August 16, the following members tackled the food lines at Carnegie Mellon University's Graduate Student Association BBQ: Dona and David Albert, Judy Clack, Kate Rothstein, Ellie Siegal, and Julie Zavan. A total of 35 were registered at the two events.

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Tues. Aug. 30, 11 am – 2 pm, Duquesne University Activities Fair on Activities Walk in front of Student Union. Bernadette Krueger, Chair

Fri. Sept. 2, 10:30 am - 2:00 pm, Carnegie Mellon University Volunteer Fair. Carnegie Mellon University, Jared Cohon University Center (CUC), Rangos Ballroom, 2nd floor. Joanne Brado and Judy Clack, co-chairs.

Wed. Sept. 7, 11 am – 1 pm, LaRoche University Activities Fair, Zappala Campus Center, Peggy Schmiedecke, Chair.

Sat. Sept. 10, 8:15 – 11:30 am, Out of Darkness Walk for Suicide Prevention, Highmark Stadium - Station Square. Judy Clack, Chair.

Wed. Sept. 14, 11 am – 1 pm, Carlow University, Judy Clack and Peggy Schmiedecke, Co-Chairs.

Sat. Sept. 17, 8:30 am – 1 pm, Pittsburgh Recovery Walk for those recovering from alcohol or drug abuse and their families. 1201 Waterfront Place. Judy Clack, Chair.

Mon. Sept. 19, 11 am – 2 pm, Duquesne University Gumberg Library, Bernadette Krueger, Chair.

Tues. Sept. 20, various times, various locations, **National Voter Registration Day**, at select Carnegie Public Library branches and ACLA branches with “greatest need.”. Once sites are confirmed, you’ll be sent a list of locations and times. Then you’ll confirm your availability. Judy Clack, Chair.

Sat. Sept. 24, 11 am – 3 pm, Coraopolis Community Block Party and Voter Registration, Shelley Y. Jones Memorial Park, 1001 First Avenue, Coraopolis, PA 15108. Co-sponsors: Black Voters Matter, NAACP Coraopolis, Pittsburgh CBTU, LWVPGH. Judy Clack, Chair.

Tues. Sept. 27, 9:15 am – 12:15 pm, Senior Resource Fair for our neighbors 55+ and those who are caring for them. Ross Community Center, 1000 Ross Municipal Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237. Judy Clack, Chair

Sat. Oct. 1, Noon – 3:00 pm, Blawnox Fall Festival, Blawnox Community Park, 500 Center Ave. at Fourth St., Blawnox, PA. 15238. Judy Clack, Chair.

Sat. Oct. 8, 9 am – 12:00 noon, Swissvale Farmers Market, in Municipal Parking Lot near 2036 Noble St., 15218. Barbara Grabowski, Chair.

2022
Voter Registration Drive & Community Block Party In Coraopolis
Free Food, Music, and Games

Saturday, September 24, 2022 11 am - 3 pm
Shelley Y. Jones Memorial Park
1001 First Ave. Coraopolis, PA 15108

For more information call or text (412) 447-1060

Voter Education

Vote By Mail Process	Election Day Planning
Ballot Education	Ride to the Polls
Polling locations	Voting Rights Laws

Sponsored by

PITTSBURGH CBTU NAACP BLACK VOTERS MATTER LWV

Educational Opportunities

Sat. September 10, 2 – 3:00 pm. Meet the Candidates Part 1 (Zoom and CLP-Homewood, 7101 Hamilton Ave., Pittsburgh, 15208). Lunch & Learn: Voter Education Series. Co-sponsored by Carnegie Public Library and VEEEM. Join us (in-person or virtually) for this monthly lunch-and-learn series where you will learn all you need to know to vote in the upcoming mid-term election. Boxed lunches will be provided to in-person attendees and gift cards for food location will be provided to Zoom attendees after the program. [Register here](#) for in person or virtual attendance.

Mon. September 12, 7 – 8:30 pm, Democracy in America Series – An Introduction to Voting Rights History, Mt. Lebanon Public Library, in person in Meeting Room A and via Zoom. Pete DiNardo (Mt. Lebanon High School, History Department) and Mike Naragon (Winchester Thurston School, History Department Chair)

Continued next page

provide an introduction of voting rights history in America. The talk will focus on the legislative history of voting rights and will explore the breadth of this history from the nineteenth century through the current cases the Supreme Court will be dealing with this fall (Moore v. Harper and independent state legislature theory). There will be a 30-minute audience Q & A following the 60-minute talk. Registration is required and will be announced in the Blast. Co-sponsored by LWVPGH.

Tues. September 13, 6 – 7:00 pm, LWVPA Ballot Box Basics Series on Zoom. This webinar will discuss Election Integrity and Security, Ballot Safeguards, Administration and Election Audits. Jonathan Marks from the Department of State will lead the conversation. [Click here to register.](#)

Committee Actions

Candidate Forums Committee decided to attempt to arrange these five candidate forums. At least two candidates must agree to participate or the LWVPGH must cancel the forum. As of now, we're working on the following potential forums. We have no commitments from candidates yet.

- 1) **PA Gubernatorial** debate at WTAE-TV studio between Josh Shapiro (D) and Doug Mastriano (R).
- 2) **17th Congressional** debate at WTAE-TV studio between Chris Deluzio (D) and Jeremy Shaffer (R).
- 3) **38th PA Senate** forum between Lindsey Williams (D) and Lori Mizgorski (R).
- 4) **30th PA Representative** forum between Arvin Venkat (D) and Cindy Kirk (R).
- 5) **33rd PA Representative** forum between Mandy Steele (D) and Ted Thompson (R).

Food Pantry Committee members held a "Packing Bee" to pack 20,000 large refrigerator magnets to be distributed to families at over 150 county food pantries. These magnets are printed with timeless voter education links including vote411.org, vote.PA.gov, and LWVPGH.org as well as the LWVPGH phone number and a voter registration QR code.

Senior Subsidized Housing Committee developed its semi-annual, 8.5"x11" double-sided, election information sheet, "Get Ready to Vote" to be emailed to over 250 housing units and activity centers. The **Faith-Based and Community Outreach Committee** will distribute this document too. In addition, the housing group is designing a door hanger with the most vital election information in a larger font to deliver to select buildings. League members may be recruited to hang these on residents' doors.

MEET OUR OFFICE MANAGER

My name is Charlesa Nelson Formley born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA. Lived in Brooklyn NY for 2 yrs and lived in the Commonwealth of Virginia for 15 years. I am currently honored to serve as New Office Manager for LWV of Greater Pittsburgh.

I have several years of experience in the corporate and various government entities. I have worked primarily as a customer service representative and contract worker in the healthcare industry. I provided Customer Care for Medicare Part D, Tricare in Virginia as a private contractor and Caremark Mail Order Pharmacy in Pittsburgh.

My hobbies are reading, mostly non-fictional books, autobiographies, history and cooking. I enjoy cooking and music.

I have volunteered my time with a variety of organizations. From food banks, protest against various injustices around the east coast of the country, canvassing to stop coal powered facilities, promoting cleaning the Chesapeake Bay, and attempting to stop fracking around the country.

I am a proud Mother and Grandmother of 3. My goal in life is to make a positive impact by helping others in the community and beyond.



BOOK CLUB REPORT by Joan Cucinotta

The book for September is *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realities around Us* by Ed Yong. Since the weather will still be mild, we will continue to meet in Anderson Shelter, September 16th at 10:30 A.M.

BOOK COMMENTARY

The premise of this month's book is expressed in its opening line: "Human beings are tribal." In *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations* by Amy Chua, "tribes" are not clusters from primitive times but contemporary groups with extremely powerful bonds. These bonds can extend from religion, race, or ethnicity to ideology and class. Chua believes that overlooking that elemental instinct has led the U.S. to several recent domestic and international failures.

Amy Chua may be better known as the "Tiger Mom" for her book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* in which she described her use of Confucianist values in her parenting techniques. She is also the author of (among other books) *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* – one of The Economist's Best Books of 2003.

The first half of *Political Tribes* is something of a whirlwind tour. Skipping through Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Venezuela, Chua comments on each nation's form of tribalism, forms generally unfamiliar to the average American. Chua takes US foreign policymakers to task for ignoring what should have been obvious to anyone paying attention to any of the individual countries. This is a fair stance to take but the book moves quite quickly through each nation with details that make the analysis seem stretched thin.

The more obvious US miscalculation that Chua outlines is the attempted imposition of a free-market democracy on any country with historic tribal constituents. What could possibly go wrong when one tribe, deprived and oppressed for years, suddenly gains power via a ballot box? Is it to usher in reforms and realize the American dream? Chua's pertinent example comes from Iraq. The US "liberated" Iraq from the Sunni rule and toppled Saddam Hussein but was ill-prepared for the backlash of the Shia tribes who were ready not for democracy, but for payback.

When Chua turns to tribalism in the U.S., domestic tribalism proves to be just as unwieldy a topic to examine. Her review of what she terms "Terror Tribes" (white terrorist groups) echoes the current thinking that such white terrorists harbor a festering sense of victimization that becomes radicalized and then narrowly focused. Their self-imposed tribal limits lock them into an echo chamber and, as Chua points out, no amount of logic or factual evidence can change their mind. Chua quickly provides a grab bag of examples of homegrown tribes from prosperity gospel groups and Sovereign Citizens to white terrorist groups and drug and gang "saints."

Political Tribes can seem somewhat superficial as it interprets policy failures in five countries based on US neglect of taking tribal issues into account, but as the Book Club members pointed out, the book still can be an important opening entry to bringing more awareness of a significant, and repeated, domestic, and international problem. The book also seems to come down a little too hard on the Left for shaping inclusivity as a series of demands and accusations. Chua notes that "American progressives...often don't realize how judgmental they are." Chua calls out the Occupy Movement because while it was meant to represent the basic economic inequalities, it mostly consisted of White people who already had some degree of economic security. One Book Club Member wondered how Chua could have not included Bishop Barber's "Poor People's Campaign" which puts the people who are the focus of the campaign at the center of the campaign. Sadly, while Chua expresses the heartfelt wish for more inclusivity and less tribal violence, the book does not recommend anything more than vague gestures about coming together.

MAGNIFICENT MEMBERS

THE WISE WOMEN (AND MEN) OF THE LEAGUE

After a summer of climate emergencies, I asked Don Naragon to answer the following interview questions. Don shared his expert knowledge of environmental and health issues as a member of the LWVPA Board of Directors. Recently, he has kept LWVPGH Board members up-to-date on the actions of the PA General Assembly. Once again, the Marvelous Members of the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh inspire!

Amy Kleissas



1. Describe your early years; where born, family then and now?

I was born in Cleveland, Ohio. My father taught American Government at Shaw High School in East Cleveland. My mother taught 3rd grade in the East Cleveland school system. Since my parents were teachers and “didn’t have anything else to do,” we spent summers on my grandparents’ farm in Lafayette Township, Medina County, Ohio – we were the needed hired hands.

2. Tell us about your educational background; who was your favorite teacher and why or who inspired you?

I was graduated from Cleveland Heights High School, Oberlin College (BA) and CWRU (PhD – organic chemistry).

3. What is your professional or work history?

DuPont 1968- 1972 research chemist – polymeric additives for nylon with men and women’s socks, shirts, blouses, and intimate apparel.

Bayer affiliated companies 1972 – 2009 1) development and manufacture of adjuvants for applying colorants to textiles, paper and leather; 2) plant production management; 3) Toxic Substances Act initial inventory coordinator for the colorants division; 4) FDA desk for Bayer Material Science LLC – compliance of polymers/resins/adjuvants with FDA’s food, medical device and drug packaging regulations and requirements.

4. Why and when did the League become important to you?

I joined in 1979 when men were first “permitted” to join the LWV. I had been discussing LWV topics/studies/issues with Nancy “forever” and we decided that I should become more involved as my work schedule permitted, which wasn’t much when we lived in New Jersey.

5. Who was a notable or first League mentor?

My dear wife, Nancy.

6. What was your League “portfolio”, including offices you held?

My first LWV responsibility had to wait until I retired from Bayer. I was a VP on LWVPA Board of Directors – environment/health with a PA focus. LWVUS covered the national perspective. Otherwise, I’ve been off-board pestering folks with science-focused information and concerns.

7. What do you feel is the most important thing(s) you accomplished for the League (and our democracy)?

Having more folks talk about environmental, agricultural, and health topics/issues and what the PA House and/or Senate are doing or not doing about these topics.

8. What are your concerns and/or hopes for a post-pandemic America?

We have been given a republic if we can keep it. Can we?

9. What are your wise words for the rest of us?

Climate change/global warming is very, very real. The weather Nancy and I experienced in Martinsville, Virginia (a city on the Virginia/Carolina line) will soon become the typical climate for Pittsburgh with a greater need for air conditioning than for heating. Cold weather agricultural crops will be replaced by crops that can thrive in warm weather. This doesn’t have to occur. Each of us can change our lifestyle to reduce our individual contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, but each of us only makes a very small contribution. Collectively, it is a large significant number. What are we waiting for?

<u>LWVGP Officers / Executive Committee</u>		<u>Local Area Meeting Chairs</u>	
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V.P.2 Administration	Preston Shimer	South Hills 412-760-9642	Maureen Mamula
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V.P.4 Program	Barbara Grabowski		
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Vote411 & Voter Guides	Annette Shimer	Vote411 & VG assistant	Michelle Zmijanac
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Community Information Center	Manager: Charlesa Nelson Formally	Marcellus Shale Grant	Manager: Heather Harr
<u>League Phone Numbers, Websites, and Social Media</u>			
Greater Pittsburgh	412-261-4284	lwvpgh.org	
Pennsylvania	717-234-1576 Ext 0	palwv.org	
National	202-429-1965	lwv.org	
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