

WE VOTER

VOLUME 29, No. 4

DECEMBER -JANUARY 2022-23

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS POSITIONS – THE BASES FOR OUR ADVOCACY WORK AND WHY PEOPLE LISTEN WHEN THE LEAGUE SPEAKS – by Barbara Grabowski

When you ask yourself “what does the League of Women Voters do” it’s understandable that the first thing that comes to mind are activities such as voter registration, candidate forums and voter guides. But the League is also engaged in advocacy: we identify issues, study and learn about those issues, develop positions and then take action based on those [positions](#). The Positions that have been adopted by the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh are here: [LWVPGH Positions](#) The Positions which have been adopted by the League of Women Voters of PA are here: [LWVPA Positions](#). Although the League of Women Voters of the U.S., the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, and our local League, the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh, each have their own respective positions, they are consistent with and amplify each other.

The process that the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh follows in deciding the positions that will form the bases of our advocacy work is called Program Planning, which is illustrated at The [LWV Program Planning Cycle](#) and the Where We Stand Graphic shown below. Our Program Planning takes place every January when members come together at our Program Planning meetings. In January 2023 we will hold three separate Program Planning meetings by Zoom on the following dates and at the following times:

- **Monday January 23 from 7pm - 8:30 pm;**
- **Wednesday January 25 from 10:30 am - Noon; and**
- **Thursday January 26 from Noon - 1:30 p.m.**

At our Program Planning meetings members review all the existing positions, both those adopted by the State League as well as those adopted by our Local League, the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh. We then discuss any suggestions for new studies that members would like the State and Local Board to consider in order to develop a position on a new issue. We also identify which existing positions should be given priority as part of our advocacy work and any positions which should be either dropped or reviewed and updated. After the meetings conclude, our Local Board and the State Board will review the comments and suggestions made by you, the members, and develop a recommended Program for the coming year that will be voted on by the Local League at the LWV of Greater Pittsburgh Annual Meeting in June 2023 and by the State League at the Biennial Convention in June 2023.

After the appropriate Board (the Local, and in alternate years, the State and National League) has voted to adopt the recommended Program, the next step is for the Board to act on the adopted Program. That involves assigning a committee to conduct a comprehensive study of either



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Well, we made it through another election cycle. There was no widespread fraud, few election deniers were elected to office, and we have reason to believe in our system.

Record numbers of Gen Z registered and voted, and large numbers of women registered and voted, across the country. Our job as members of the League of Women Voters is to figure out how to keep them voting and encouraging them to continue to be politically active.

What makes you go to your polling place, twice a year, every year? What compels you to speak up and out about injustice and inequities in voting and the many other positions we support locally, statewide and nationally? We know not every election will drive voters to the polls. Our task as the League of Women Voters is to keep voters engaged, motivated, and informed thereby helping create the Super Voters of the future.

We provide Civic Education to students and the community, we register voters, and we maintain one of the most informative websites in the State of Pennsylvania,

possibly the nation. What else can we do to educate and motivate voters to turn out and keep turning out?

We are striving to more inclusive, but maybe we are missing a group or community that needs a registration event or a program. Please bring that to our attention. We have recently been parts of committees that reach out to returning citizens or formerly incarcerated individuals and are working to inform them of their right to vote "When your feet hit the street" is the motto.

We visit university campuses to register students, and we provide information about voting to the Deaf Community by using an ASL interpreter for some of our videos. Who else should we reach out to regularly with registrations or programs?

We welcome and value all members' ideas and their time as volunteers. Maybe there's something you thought of that will bring voters out or a way to inform them. Please consider bringing those ideas to the attention of our Board of Directors and our Committee Chairs. All ideas are worth exploring to preserve our Democracy.

As Benjamin Franklin is believed to have famously said when asked if we had a republic or a monarchy as he exited the Constitutional Convention,

"A Republic, if you can keep it." We have kept it, for now.

Best,
Michele Knoll, President

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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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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**
Currently not meeting.
education@lwvpgh.org
- ✓ **Voter Service Committee**
1st 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**
Currently not meeting. 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.

January- February Calendar

January

9 Mon	Board meeting, 12:30 pm, on Zoom
16 Mon	Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast at La Roche University
17 Tue	LWVPA Government Policy Update, 7:00-8:00 pm. Register to watch here . Updates are held the third Tuesday of each month.
20 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club meeting, 10:30-2, Squirrel Hill Library
23 Mon	Program Planning Meeting, 7-8:30 on Zoom
25 Wed	Program Planning Meeting, 10:30 am to noon on Zoom
26 Thu	Program Planning Meeting, noon-1:30 pm on Zoom
31 Tue	Voter Service Committee for February, 12:30-2:30 on Zoom

February

7 Tue	Special Election for the 32nd Legislative District
13 Mon	Board meeting, 12:30 pm, on Zoom
17 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club meeting, 10:30-2, Squirrel Hill Library
21 Tue	LWVPA Government Policy Update, 7:00-8:00 pm. Register to watch here . Updates are held the third Tuesday of each month.

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an existing position that the Board has determined should be reviewed and updated or for a new proposed position based on a newly identified issue.

Typically, the study includes an analysis of all sides of the issue and can include consulting community leaders and recognized experts to gather as much information as possible. As part of that process, the committee develops “consensus questions” to guide members in their discussions. Members are invited to attend meetings to discuss the research conducted, hear the committee’s reports, and finally to reach conclusions by responding to the consensus questions. The consensus reached by all the members participating in the study shapes the position that the Local and State Leagues will ultimately adopt. This process is in line with the League’s tradition of grass roots deliberations.

We look forward to your participation at our Program Planning meeting and hearing about the issues that are of concern and interest to you, our members.

SURVEY RESULTS

Thank you to all who responded to the Survey: I appreciate your suggestions for topics and speakers. Stay tuned for announcements for future speakers and presentations in the Voter and on our website.



TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT ELECTIONS FOR EVERYONE.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10, THE PENNSYLVANIA SENATE IS SCHEDULED TO VOTE ON TWO CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS WHICH COULD ERODE VOTING RIGHTS AND ELECTION INTEGRITY.

- **SB 1** WOULD **CREATE ADDITIONAL VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS IN A STATE WITH ALREADY STRICT VOTER ID LAW:** PENNSYLVANIANS MUST CURRENTLY PRESENT A GOVERNMENT-ISSUED OR STUDENT ID WHEN THEY REGISTER TO VOTE, OR VOTE AT A NEW LOCATION. AS SUCH, THERE IS ALREADY A SYSTEM IN PLACE TO CONFIRM VOTER IDENTITY. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR TIGHTENING VOTER ID RULES IS TO PREVENT FRAUD. BUT SIGNIFICANT VOTER FRAUD, ESPECIALLY VOTER IMPERSONATION, IS VIRTUALLY NONEXISTENT. WHAT THIS BILL WILL DO IS MAKE OUR ELECTIONS HARDER TO ACCESS FOR OLDER VOTERS, LOW-INCOME VOTERS, VOTERS OF COLOR, VOTERS WITH DISABILITIES, AND VOTERS WITH LIMITED ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY.

FURTHERMORE, REQUIRING VOTER ID DOES *NOT* REQUIRE A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. VOTER ID CAN - AND SHOULD BE - A CHANGE THAT IS LEGISLATIVELY ENACTED BY AMENDING THE ELECTION CODE.

- **SB 130** WOULD **REQUIRE THAT ELECTIONS BE AUDITED BY THE PA AUDITOR GENERAL:** THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF STATE IS THE OFFICE WITH ELECTION OVERSIGHT. THEY ALREADY CONDUCT RISK-LIMITING AUDITS TO HELP AFFIRM THE INTEGRITY OF THE PROCESS. THIS AMENDMENT REINFORCES A LACK OF TRUST IN ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AT BOTH THE COUNTY AND STATE LEVELS, AND AIMS TO SHIFT POWER AWAY FROM ACTUAL ELECTION OFFICIALS AND PLACE IT UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF ANOTHER AGENCY.

LWVPA STRONGLY OPPOSES BOTH THESE PROPOSED BILLS. BURDENSOME VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS WOULD DISENFRANCHISE PENNSYLVANIA VOTERS. ADDITIONAL ELECTION AUDITS WOULD REDUCE TRUST IN THE INTEGRITY OF OUR ELECTIONS, WHICH HAVE ALREADY SHOWN TO BE EFFECTIVELY ADMINISTERED AND AUDITED. THESE AMENDMENTS HAVE BEEN CONTROVERSIAL FROM THE START AND SHOULD NOT PASS A SECOND TIME.

PLEASE CALL YOUR SENATOR EARLY TUESDAY TO ASK THEM TO VOTE **NO** ON THIS VOTE.

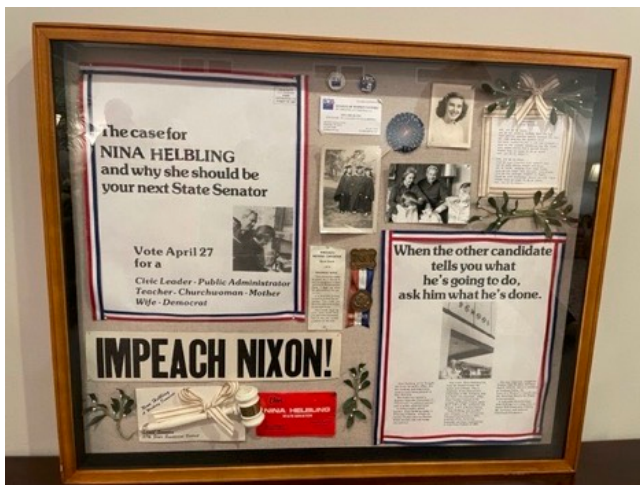
Note: This Voter is being distributed the evening of January 9. Make that call tomorrow.



In Memory of Nina M. Helbling
June 5, 1929 – November 24, 2022

Lifetime League member, Nina Helbling, who passed away in November, will be remembered as a founding member of the Mt. Lebanon LWV, and was one of a group of Mt. Lebanon members who significantly improved this community through the application of League principles, studies, observation of boards and commissions, civic engagement and running for office. Nina was part of an amazing team of women including Mary Larsen, June Delano, Carol Beale and Carol Walton that enabled this local League to influence the development of Mt. Lebanon in ways that are still in effect today.

She was a devoted wife and mother as well, although her children report that they participated in many league projects at home such as printing, folding and mailing newsletters, taking phone calls and participating at the dinner table as local government issues were discussed.



When I became active in the League in Upper St. Clair in 1977, I quickly found Nina to be a resource person who could tell me what was going on, clearly, factually and with the emphasis on quality government. I valued her counsel. She taught me the importance of league program planning and league positions.

During the 1970's, Nina served as chairman of the local Democratic Party and also became a candidate for the 37th PA Senate District. She ran a tough campaign but was defeated in the primary. It took courage to run as a woman and she came close to winning. Check out the photo of the bulletin board in her campaign office showing her positions and concerns at the time.

When serving as an elected official didn't work out, she applied to Pitt's Graduate School of International and Public Affairs and then used her degree for a career in the Pittsburgh office of the State Department of Community Affairs.

Her interest and concern never stopped. Only recently we had a phone conversation about election integrity and mail-in voting. League members are very special people and Nina Helbling set the standard.

Annette Shimer (with help from Preston)

VOTER SERVICE REPORT by Judy Clack, Voter Service Chair



Three Special Elections

Allegheny County will hold three Special Elections for empty State Legislative seats for the 32nd, 34th, and 35th Districts. (Check out Webmaster Ruth Quint's informative Special Elections page at lwvpg.org/special which includes maps and candidates' names.) The LWVPGH Voter Service Committee will work on informing the public in these three districts by creating Vote411.org online voters guides and website mini-guides, holding three Zoom candidate forums, and conducting informational efforts in those three communities. The first Special Election, for the 32nd Legislative District, will be on Tuesday, February 7. The other two elections could be delayed as late as the May 16 Primary Election if the two

major political parties do not reach agreement on an earlier date.

The LWVPGH Voter Service Committee members plan to reach out to Senior Subsidized Housing Buildings in those three districts to inform them of the special elections as well as registration and mail-in ballot deadlines. Other Civic Education members will inform college and university students in those areas. We need more members to help in these and other endeavors to reach populations in those three districts. Email Judy Clack if you are interested: voterservice@lwvgh.org.

Join Voter Service Committee

Any LWVPGH member can join the Voter Service Committee and assist with a variety of voter education activities including:

- voter registration at high schools, colleges, naturalization ceremonies, and community events;
- candidate forums, voters' guides (Vote411);
- educational outreach to senior subsidized housing buildings, food pantries, faith-based organizations, Spanish-speaking organizations, formerly incarcerated individuals (returning citizens), farmers markets, and libraries;
- creating written, audio, and video voter-education materials;
- volunteering as poll workers or for election protection;
- following legislative action

If there is a volunteer opportunity that interests you, email Judy Clack at voterservice@lwvpg.org, and she'll match you up with other members on that subcommittee. The full Voter Service committee usually meets on the first Tuesday of the month on Zoom from 12:30 – 2:30 pm. However, we have changed the Feb. 7 meeting to **Tues. Jan. 31** so as not to conflict with the Special Election(s). All interested members can be added to the listserv and receive the Agenda and Zoom link (which is also in the Members Calendar.)

IN MEMORIAM – KAREN LIGHTELL

LWVPGH member Karen Lightell died on November 29, 2022, after living with cancer for 25 years. She was 63 years old. Karen was instrumental in our outreach in the community to recruit people to work the polls both in local businesses and in colleges during the pandemic. Karen was a significant contributor to the LWVPGH Poll Workers Recruitment Committee and created many of its documents including flyers, infographics, and social media posts. Karen led LWVPGH efforts to recruit poll workers on college campuses and as well as from employees of local businesses and nonprofits.

Professionally, Karen was an accomplished communications executive, having worked in Washington, DC, for the worldwide firm of Burson-Marsteller and as Press Secretary to Congressman Bill Goodling. Upon returning to Pittsburgh, she once again worked for Burson-Marsteller, followed by Dymun-Nelson and Red House Communications. She also led communications for the Senator John Heinz History Center. Karen has listed the LWVPGH as a recipient of donations in her memory.

Judy Clack

CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY AND VIDEO TEAMS

BY JOANNE MOORE AND AMY KLEISSAS

Stories from the Road

First, let's celebrate our amazing successes for the 2022 Midterm Elections. *Many thanks to all our Civic Education team members and to all the League volunteers who made this possible!*

- Completed **TEN new YouTube voter empowerment videos** and created a new Video web page.
- Coordinated **NINE voter drives** on college-university campuses with the welcomed help from Judy Clack, Voter Service!
- Created and delivered **EIGHTEEN Civic Education presentations** for colleges, universities, and organizations in September and October!
- Created, assembled, and distributed **4000 Ready-Set-Vote bags** affecting thousands of possible new Pittsburgh Public School and community voters!
- Mailed **Happy 18th Birthday Voter Registration Posters with QR Codes to all high schools** in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties potentially reaching thousands of high school students!

Using QR Codes, we potentially added **over 250 new voter registrations plus 80 new registrations at college-university campuses**. The number of new voter registrations through our efforts at Pittsburgh Public Schools will be reported soon.

How we received those registrations and who we met along the way makes for some interesting stories:

University of Pittsburgh LWVPGH Panel for Civic Engagement Week: For almost the first time, we were able to visit in-person. Over 30 students attended; they represented every class—freshman to seniors and many majors. What was so inspiring, was the rapt attention of the students and the wise words that poured from our four panelists: Dr. Terrie Griffin, Martha Raak, Eileen Olmsted, and Preston Shimer. Give yourself a treat and watch this video between the holidays. *Thanks to Michelle Grant for filming and editing.* **Find it on our LWVPGH YouTube channel [here](#).**

Temple Sinai (Brotherhood and Women of): These folks were interested in the behind the scenes journey of an **official election ballot**. Information from our video of the same name was presented. Their questions were informed and reflected their engagement in supporting voting and reproductive rights.

Macedonia FACE Senior Center at the Thelma Lovette YMCA Center: The return visit to these senior citizens was more challenging in this post-pandemic period. It's always a pleasure to talk with an animated audience and our interactive discussion was lively!

Repair the World Voter Registration Event In Honor of Mel Wax from the Tree of Life Synagogue: A two-part process: A voter registration video was recorded and shown to Repair the World volunteers. Those volunteers joined LWVPGH and B-PEP volunteers at a Steelers before-game voter drive at Heinz Field. The event was part of **Repair the World's 10.27 Commemorative Days of Service** honoring Mel Wax, a Holocaust survivor with a passion for democracy and civic engagement. Volunteers answered questions and had many engaging conversations with voters.

Some very personal stories were also shared.

PERSAD: In October, we presented at our region's oldest, and the nation's second oldest organization dedicated to the needs of the LGBTQ community. The work we are doing with incarcerated and returning citizens was met with a very enthusiastic response. One gentleman, who had worked at the Allegheny County Jail was quite emphatic in stating that in his experience, *"They don't want them (the incarcerated) to vote."*

Continued next page

He further shared that many formerly incarcerated with felony convictions do not know that once their “feet hit the street”, they are eligible to register and vote again. He shared the story of a friend who, in his youth in the Vietnam era, burned his draft card and served three years in a federal penitentiary. Upon completion of his sentence, he turned to the Catholic Church and, with special permission because of his record, studied for and became a priest. *This priest did not learn until just a few years ago that he was eligible to vote.*

Job Corps: Other stories lay just below the surface for some of our attendees. Job Corps is an organization dedicated to the education and training of young people ages 16 to 24, who have been involved in the social services system. Students who had just registered to vote asked myriad questions about their first voting experience. *Questions included “Can you please tell me the basic difference between a Republican and a Democrat?” to “Why wasn’t Ye on the ballot?”* But most poignant was the response we got to our question of *“what issues are important to you?”* We heard something we have never heard before from students. Two of them said with sincerity and earnestness, *“Fair Housing.” Why? Because they have been homeless and are now living at the Job Corps campus housing.*

While we can never fully measure the direct impact of the work we do, when we listen to our fellow citizens and to youth, we know we are on the right track. Here is one final story:

Goodwill and Action Housing: Staff from these organizations gave us positive feedback about the voter registration information we provided for their workers.

We also had an interesting night with young adults at **Action Housing’s Uptown Lofts**, who have aged-out of the foster care program. They challenged us to provide reasons to not be apathetic and instead, to give them powerful reasons to participate through their vote. We worked hard that night!

And it paid off. From Jodi Lincoln at Uptown Lofts:

“Wanted to share this with you – After you came and met with the young adults and Uptown Lofts, they continued to have a ton of great discussions about the issues that mattered to them and why voting is important. The one girl who was pretty adamant about not wanting to vote and not feeling like politics mattered in her life was actually convinced by her peers in those discussions to go and vote. Staff reported that on election day she came tearing into the office with her “I Voted” sticker, bragging about it and excited to have voted! So your visit definitely made an impact!

Don’t know our exact voter turnout for the folks who were at the event but based on anecdotal evidence I think it was very high. Thanks for everything you did!”

A Healthy and Happy Holiday wish to all our dedicated LWVPGH members!

AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF PENNSYLVANIA

LWVPA is pleased to announce the official date and location of the 2023 state Convention:

**June 16th-18th, 2023
Crowne Plaza Hotel
Harrisburg, PA**

We’re looking forward to holding the 55th biennial Convention in our state’s Capitol, and we hope you’ll join us as we celebrate our work and plan for the next biennium. Please keep a lookout for upcoming communications, including our first call, which will contain more details and registration information.

A SNAPSHOT FROM LWVUS

Terrie Griffin sent this message from Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, LWVUS president:

Democracy prevailed in 2022.

Despite anti-voter laws, mis- and disinformation, election deniers, and poll worker shortages, the American people voted in record numbers.

This is largely thanks to you.

We have put together a snapshot of just a few of the ways we empowered voters with your support.

Thank you for your tireless work defending the freedom to vote.



2022 Election Report: At a Glance

The 2022 midterm elections demonstrated the power of women, young people, people of color, and all voters who care about democracy.

Across the country, the League of Women Voters powered the elections. 750+ state and local Leagues registered voters, trained volunteers, served as poll workers, and organized to get out the vote!

The following data represents a snapshot of our impact in the 2022 midterm elections as of November 10, 2022.

Contacted 22+ million voters with election info	Protected 17.7+ million voters through legal action
Shared election info with 4.6+ million voters via VOTE411.org	Reached 3+ million voters with English and Spanish- language ads
Drove 225k+ visits to VOTE411's Spanish-language pages	Covered 52k+ candidates in voter guides

Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast at La Roche University

LWVPGH has been a sponsor of this event in the North Hills for many years. Until recently, Shirley McIlvried was our representative on the event planning committee. She is no longer able to do that. The event committee has asked us to publicize the event. The reservation mailing deadline is now January 11. If you can support this event, please do so. (The breakfast is always delicious.)



"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend."

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

"Nonviolence is an imperative in order to bring about ultimate community."

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate: only **love** can do that."

Join us at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast

January 16, 2023

Registration at 8:00am | Breakfast and Program at 8:30am

LA ROCHE UNIVERSITY, Zappala Campus Center
9000 Babcock Boulevard, McCandless Township

Keynote Speaker

Sabrina Saunders Mosby

CEO of Vibrant Pittsburgh

Limited seating – make reservations now! Seating cannot be guaranteed without reservations.

✍

For reservations, please return this portion of the form along with your check, made payable to: **North Hills Anti-Racism Coalition**, in the amount of \$18.00 for adults and \$10.00 for students K - 12. No charge for members of the Youth Choir and under school age children. Questions: peischl@comcast.net.

**Please mail reservations including payment by January 10, 2023, to:
MLK Breakfast, J. Peischl, 8244 Coach Court, Allison Park, PA 15101**

Name _____
Please list additional names on the reverse side

Number of Adults _____

Address _____

Number of Students _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

Youth Choir Member _____

Email _____

Organization _____

_____ I/We plan to attend, enclosed is the registration fee \$ _____

_____ I am unable to attend. Enclosed is my donation to support this worthwhile
function \$ _____

_____ I/We would like to participate in a local service project between 10:30am and 12 noon.

Sponsoring organizations: American Association of University Women North Hills Pittsburgh, La Roche University, League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh, North Hills Anti-Racism Coalition, North Hills Community Outreach, North Hills Ebony Women, Inc., North Hills People for Peace, Sisters of Divine Providence.

BOOK CLUB REPORT by Joan Cucinotta

NEXT MEETING

For the January meeting, we want to educate ourselves on some of the many issues touching the lives of Native Americans. To that end, each person should select a reading of any kind and of any genre to share with the members at the meeting. If you are stuck for something to pick, [here are some titles](#) that I have found interesting (summary quotes from Amazon). None of them deal with current affairs though which we should definitely include – for example, things like how the vote is suppressed among Native Americans, generational impoverishment, the high murder rate among Indigenous women, land issues, health care issues, protection of natural resources and climate change issues, and obviously so many more. We will gather on January 20th at 10:30 A.M. in the Squirrel Hill Library meeting room. See you there!

BOOK COMMENTARY

This month the Book Club read widely about Fascism. You will find some of the sources that informed our discussion listed below. What surprised us in our reading and observations was the increasing spread of fascistic governments around the world (for example in Turkey, Hungary, and Italy). We noted the several repugnant underlying elements of fascism (anti-semitism, cults of personality, patriarchy, racism, anti-immigration, etc), have all been elements in the American culture. But separately and even at their most virulent, these elements do not constitute a fascistic force. Our reading led us to see that it's violence that triggers Fascism, violence that empowers the efforts to achieve the goals of any of those elements. We noted the slow but increasing presence in alt-right groups of paramilitary menswear and provocatively displayed assault rifles, accompanied by escalating threats and promises of violence. This rapidly enlarging infection erupted finally on January 6th when violence was used to disrupt and prevent the democratic process and to seize control of the government. With the use of force, Fascism had made its presence visible in the United States.

The group also noted the devotional Christian veneer common to the alt-right groups. One of the things that makes this peculiarly American is the recognizable connections to the Puritan origins here in North America. The alt-right groups share many of the same beliefs as the Puritans: patriarchy, anti-immigration, intolerance of outsiders, racism, and sexism – these are the most obvious commonalities. The Puritans also had a strong sense of the looming Apocalypse and used its imminence to cow people into obedience and conformity. We noted a similar pattern in contemporary alt-right groups who gain the power that Fascism seeks by claiming that contemporary America is somehow politically and morally befouled, that it is in need of purging and a return to some imagined golden age of innocence. This call to action is the driver that radicalizes so many disaffected young white men who take up the call to exterminate any number of minorities and see themselves as heroic.

If the right suffers from this damaging apocalyptic vision, is there a version of this on the left as well? In the lead-up to the recent midterm elections, there were many dire warnings about the possible consequences of the results. Many on the left warned against the elevation of candidates who would not conform to the election process and law. They warned that their presence could spell the end of the United States and an end of democracy itself. Is that the left's version of an apocalyptic vision? No. And a hard "no" at that because of all the political ideologies, Fascism is uniquely antithetical to democracy. The midterms held out the prospect of the possible election of people who are election deniers, people who want to curtail our right to vote, and people who want to bypass election laws. So the midterms did, in fact, look like a three-alarm fire with candidates proposing actions targeting the vote and the election process. Fortunately, most of those candidates were not successful with the voters. Frankly, all of this only underscores the importance of the work of the League of Women Voters and the critical work of supporting and maintaining the vote, the very life's breath of democracy.

(Our discussion on Fascism was partially informed by the following books: *Fascism* by Madeleine Albright, *The Pope and Mussolini* by David Kertzer, *The War on Everything* by Robert Evans, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by William Schirer)

<u>LWVGP Officers / Executive Committee</u>		<u>Local Area Meeting Chairs</u>	
President (and Advocacy)	Michelle Knoll	Pgh. Central 412-477-7572	Martha Raak
V.P.1 Administration	Preston Shimer	North Hills 412-779-3089	Nancy Mott
V.P.2 Voter Service	Judy Clack	South Hills 412-760-9642	Maureen Mamula
V.P.3 Development	Nancy Naragon		
V.P.4 Program	Barbara Grabowski		
Secretary	Kathy Herbst		
Treasurer	Preston Shimer		
<u>Directors</u>		<u>Interest & Service Area Specialists</u>	
Membership, Naturalization	Judy Diorio	Election Integrity	Ron Bandes
Social media	Emily Ferri	Civic Ed: Harvard Study	Cris Beuger
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion	Terrie Griffin	VOTER Editor	Sue Broughton
Pres emerita, Leg update	Maureen Grosheider	Book Club	Joan Cucinotta
Civic Education	Amy Kleissas	Gov. relations, Outreach	Jackie Dixon
Webmaster	Ruth Quint	Science and Environment	Don Naragon
Vote411 & Voter Guides	Annette Shimer	Blast	Eileen Olmsted
Budget	Ellie Siegal	Vote411 & VG assistant	Michelle Zmijanac
<u>Staff</u>			
Community Information Center	Manager: Charlesa Nelson Formley	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	lww.org	
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