

WE VOTER

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

VOLUME 30, No. 8

MAY 2024

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

by Preston Shimer, 1st VP Administration



A League Annual Meeting is a major event for the League each year. Prior to Covid we would gather for a social hour (yes, with a bar available), enjoy dinner together and then hold the formal part of the meeting. In the meeting we adopt League positions, elect officers and board members, and adopt the budget. **It requires a quorum to conduct this business, so we hope that many members will attend this year.** In previous years, we then reviewed the achievements of the past year, presented awards and asked the members to provide their recommendations to the new Board, a process called "Directions to the Board." At the end, we took the time to sincerely thank those officers and members who were leaving the Board for their dedication and hard work.

The President is responsible for running the Annual Meeting and our President, Michele Knoll, has provided an efficient agenda which will be made available to all of us in the Annual Meeting Workbook. Suzanne Broughton is the Editor and Publisher of the workbook. Look for it on or shortly before May 19. This year, as Administration VP, I am helping the President with the arrangements. My goal is providing time and space for as many of us as can attend to get together once more to enjoy the social side of being a League member. I know many of you join me in recognition that some of our best friends are League members. Our newer members, joining during Covid and since, are developing these friendships through our work, but we have not had much time just to be together and chat. So we are providing time before and after the Annual Meeting just to be together, to be friends and to become friends.

We have rented the large room in the **Conference Center, located in the lower level of the Koppers Building** from 10 AM until 2 PM. Coffee, bagels and donuts will be available. The formal meeting will start promptly at 11 AM. At some point, we will stop for lunch, which is catered and costs \$16 per person. Michele Knoll selected Waterfall Catering. Past experience suggests it will be outstanding. The meeting will continue after lunch and highlight a showing of our outstanding civic education videos produced by the Civic Ed Committee and member, Michelle Grant. When the meeting ends, there is no need to dash off.

Please register via the Events Calendar on our Website. Here is a direct link:

https://lwvpgh.org/content.aspx?page_id=4002&club_id=554754&item_id=2268723.

You can pay \$16 for lunch with cash or check when you arrive at the Annual Meeting or by credit card in advance using the this link https://lwvpgh.org/content.aspx?page_id=305&club_id=554754&item_id=11879.

Expect a hearty welcome on Sunday morning, June 9th, around 10 AM when you arrive at the **Conference Center, Koppers Building, 436 Seventh Avenue** in Pittsburgh. **Use the 7th Avenue Entrance and take the special elevator or stairs down one level.** See you there!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



As I approach the end of my term as President, I would like to thank the Board of Directors and all the members of the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh for your support and mentorship during my term. I

quickly found out that there are a lot of moving parts to managing an organization of almost 300 members and still make a significant difference in our political atmosphere.

Members of the League strive to preserve and strengthen our Democracy at all times through education, registration, and inclusion. This is something I sought to foster throughout my term, but I hardly had to worry about achieving these goals since you all, of course, want the same thing. Our aspirations will carry us forward and fighting for truth and transparency in our preservation of Democracy as we preserver.

Stay the course and fight the good fight as you go forward.

In League,



President of the League of Women Voter of
Greater Pittsburgh

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ADVANCING OUR POSITION ON GUN SAFETY by Preston Shimer and Nancy Naragon, May 9, 2024

Getting the delegates to the LWVUS National Convention at the end of June to adopt our recently approved local position on Gun Safety in a Free Society by concurrence is not going to be easy.

The League process began by submitting the position to the Convention Program Committee of the LWVUS Board. Their job is to review submissions and adopt a recommended program to be voted on by the national convention delegates. This committee chose to adopt a position proposed by the LWV of Washington State regarding local newspapers, a LWVUS proposed study on the Judicial System as well as continuing their Make Democracy Work positions. The Pittsburgh position was not adopted. We were authorized to proceed to lobby for and hopefully gain acceptance of our position on the convention floor. The delegates will first vote to consider our recommendation on the first day of convention. If the consideration vote is successful, we will have time to present our pro and con justifications during debate the second day. The convention will vote on adopting our position on the final convention day.

In the past, LWVUS enabled Leagues supporting the adoption of a "not-recommended" program item to communicate and gain support for their recommendation by providing email addresses to all local and state league contacts. This year, the emails were not made available, on personal privacy grounds. The logic is that most League officers use personal email accounts for League business. As you know, the Pittsburgh League adopted the practice of using position emails for League officers several years ago. LWVUS applauded us for doing this, but most Leagues do not. Instead, the LWVUS provides a website identified as "groups.io" as the location for local and state Leagues to find information about proposed programs such as ours. We are complying with their recommendations and have posted our information.

During a recent video meeting with the LWVUS Program Committee, we asked for the reason our proposal was not accepted as a recommended program and why the Washington State LWV position was adopted. One of the reasons offered was that their proposal came with a number of state and local league recommendations that the program be adopted.

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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
- ✓ **Web Team**
4th Monday of the month at
noon. Contact; Ruth Quint,
412-630-8677 or
webmaster@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 changes are made.

May-June Calendar

May

7 Tue	Voter Service Meeting, 12:30 pm, by Zoom
13 Mon	Board meeting, 12:30 pm
17 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club meeting, 10:30-2:00
27 Mon	Web Team Meeting, 12:00 pm-1:00 pm by Zoom

June

Sat 1	Voter Registration, Pittsburgh Pride Festival, 11am-2pm, 2pm-5pm
Tue 4	Voter Service Meeting, 12:30 pm, by Zoom
Sun 9	LWVPGH Annual Meeting, 10am-2pm, Koppers Building Conference Center
Mon 10	Board Meeting, 12:30 pm
Sat 15	Voter Registration, Juneteenth Grand Jubilee Parade, 10am-1pm
Fri 21	Non-fiction Book Club meeting, 10:30-2:00
Mon 24	Web Team Meeting, 12:00 pm-1:00 pm by Zoom
Thu-Sun 27-30	LWVUS National Convention, More info at https://lwvpgh.org/ content.aspx?page_id=4002&club_id=554754&item_id=2289937
Sat 29	Voter Registration, Open Streets, 9-11:30am or 11:30-2:15pm

Senior Outreach Presentation

Recently, LWVPGH received a request to help at an event at the PA Bidwell High Rise, part of the City of Pittsburgh Housing Authority. It was organized by two women who vote there and wanted a higher turnout. After speaking with several members about our requirement that this be non-partisan, they organized an event with refreshments, music and door prizes. 20 people attended. A member of the Senior Outreach Committee conducted a presentation about voting basics, the importance of the primary, the offices on the ballot, and the candidates for their districts.

After the event, the presenter received a thank you note that read.

"I would like to thank you and LWV for your dedication and hard work to inform, educate, and empower people about voting!

Your commitment in this space is unmatched and sets a high standard for others to follow.

Sincerely, Paulette and Lilly"

Advancing our Position on Gun Safety, continued from Page 2

Washington State had ignored the LWVUS recommendation to just post to groups.io and gone after these other recommendations using emails they obtained through other means. Nancy Naragon and I felt that we had followed the rules when we should have ignored them and were disadvantaged by following their rules.

We are now scrambling to obtain the state email and major local league email contacts to quickly get our information into the hands of the delegates in advance of the convention. We have a convention Caucus meeting on Friday June 28th at 10:45 AM to talk to delegates and have to be on the convention floor each day to speak.

We came away from the video meeting with the impression that the LWVUS committee believes that the current national position on guns is adequate and doesn't need improvement. It has been around since the 1990's and LWVUS has lobbied on legislation using it. When asked if they had watched the video we provided, only one member replied "Yes." While they all acknowledged that guns are a problem, it did not seem that they wanted to engage in understanding the Pittsburgh recommendation. They didn't want to consider the lack of success the League has had with its current position.

It will be an uphill slog for us, and we may not achieve our goal of adoption by the National Convention. However, we will try hard and show up. If we fail nationally, we can continue to work at the state and local levels for its adoption by other League organizations.

PRT'S FIRST CLIMATE ACTION PLAN by Preston Shimer

While I am not serving as an official LWV representative, for years, beginning with Marilyn Skolnik, then Barbara Simpson and now me, one or more League members have been involved with the region's mass transportation system as members of the Allegheny County Transit Council (ACTC). Currently, League member Michelle Zmijanac is completing a term as a member of the PRT Board of Directors.

Serving on the ACTC gives me some insight into major transit events, for example, the major rebuilding of the light rail subway/surface system operating between the North Shore and the South Hills which is starting now and will continue for the next few years.

However, the authority has issued the following Press Release announcing the PRT Climate Action Plan which is starting today. Press coverage today is not the same as it was and you may miss seeing this information. Just in case, here it is for your review.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (April 22, 2024) – To commemorate Earth Day, Pittsburgh Regional Transit today unveiled the agency's first climate action plan to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions and improve the overall health of residents across Allegheny County.

PRT's climate action plan is the agency's first roadmap to a zero-emissions future. It identifies short- and long-term steps PRT can take to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, production of greenhouse gasses, and the negative environmental impacts they create.

"Public transit plays an essential role in building a more sustainable and equitable Allegheny County," said PRT CEO Katharine Kelleman. "We are extremely excited to join many of our peer agencies across the country in recognizing the growing impact of climate change and to cultivate new partnerships locally as we improve the health and wellbeing of residents across Southwestern Pennsylvania."

Growing ridership, reducing diesel emissions by switching to zero-emissions vehicles, and reducing building energy usage are among the three most impactful steps PRT can take to reduce its carbon footprint, according to the plan. PRT has committed to operating a zero-emissions fleet by 2045.

"This is not just about embracing cleaner technology; this is a blueprint for our future," Kelleman said.

The climate action plan can be found at engage.rideprt.org/climate-action.

To help coordinate, execute, and evaluate the success of PRT's efforts, the agency will soon hire a sustainability director whose goal will be to help usher the climate action plan forward. That position, which will report to PRT's deputy chief of strategic initiatives, was included in the agency's 2023-24 budget.

VOTER SERVICE REPORT by Judy Clack, Vice President of Voter Services



Many, many LWVPGH members contributed their time and expertise to various Voter Service Committees to provide educational outreach to multiple communities prior to the April 23 Primary Election. The **Senior Outreach Committee** reached over 200 senior buildings, senior centers and Meals on Wheels sites delivering *Get Ready to Vote* fliers, door hangers, and *Your Government Officials Directories*. The **Food Bank Committee** handed out LWVPGH refrigerator magnets and *Your Government Officials Directories* to 2,000 households being served at eight Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank walk-up or drive-up food distribution sites. The **Faith-Based and Community Outreach Committee** emailed nearly 400 institutions the *Get Ready to Vote* flier in English and Spanish as well as four slides of election information to be shown on their electronic bulletin boards. The **Candidate Forum Committee** provided volunteers for three community *Eat, Meet, and Greet the Candidate* events on the Eastside, Northside, and Southside of Pittsburgh. Our primary-related **Website pages** received over 5,100 views in the month leading up to the Primary including 2,200 views or downloads of the *Voters' Guide*. vote411.org had 5990 local users while thousands of copies of the *Voters' Guide* were distributed to libraries, colleges, and subscribers to the *New Pittsburgh Courier*. Thanks to each and every one of our members and chairs who gave their time so that residents in Allegheny County could be better informed before voting.

June – October 2024 LWVPGH Volunteer Events Calendar

Summer means voter registration. Here's a listing-to-date of the events at which the LWVPGH will participate. All need many volunteers. Contact emails are listed for each. You will receive full instructions before each event. Thanks for volunteering.

Sat. June 1, Shifts: 11 am – 2 pm or 2 pm – 5 pm.

Pittsburgh Pride Festival Voter Registration, [Allegheny Commons Park West, West Ohio Street, Pittsburgh, 15212](#). Email Judy Clack with preferred shift: voterservice@lwvpgh.org. Full details will be emailed to you including table location.

Sat. June 15, 10 am – 1 pm, Juneteenth Grand Jubilee Parade. March to celebrate the end of American Enslavement. Line up at [Freedom Corner, Centre Ave. at Crawford St., 15219](#), across from the Church of St. Benedict the Moor, 91 Crawford St., 15219. You'll be marching 1.3 miles but doing lots of standing. Email Judy Clack to march with LWVPGH:

voterservice@lwvpgh.org. Full details will be emailed to you.

Sat. June 29, Shifts: 9 – 11:30 am or 11:30 am – 2:15 pm. Open Streets PA Voter Registration. A BikePgh event. Streets closed from **The Hill District to Downtown** for walking, biking, skating, baby strollers. Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3OLslkahBU>. Email Judy Clack with preferred shift: voterservice@lwvpgh.org. Full details will be emailed to you including table location.



Meet our new Office Manager, Jenna Latour Nichols. Jenna is in the LWVPGH office Monday – Friday, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm, 412-261-4284 or info@lwvpgh.org. Jenna is pictured here providing LWVPGH educational information and voter registration at UMPC's first Volunteer Fair on April 26. Not pictured is Judy Clack.

Continued on next page

Sat., July 27, Shifts: 9 – 11:30 am or 11:30 am – 2:15 pm. **Open Streets PA Voter Registration**. A BikePgh event. Streets closed in **East End Neighborhoods** (East Liberty, Homewood, Larimer, up right to the border of Wilkinsburg) for walking, biking, skating, baby strollers. Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3OLsIkahBU>. Email Judy Clack with preferred shift: voterservice@lwvpgh.org. Full details will be emailed to you including table location.

Wed. Aug. 21, 9 am – 2 pm, **Amy Kleissas' Ready-Set-Vote Bag Packing Bee #1** with lunch. Email Amy Kleissas to volunteer: civic.education@lwvpgh.org.

Thurs. Aug. 22, 9 am – 2 pm, **Amy Kleissas' Ready-Set-Vote Bag Packing Bee #2** with lunch. Email Amy Kleissas to volunteer: civic.education@lwvpgh.org.

Fri. Aug. 23, 9 am – 2 pm, **Amy Kleissas' Ready-Set-Vote Bag Packing Bee #3** with lunch. Email Amy Kleissas to volunteer: civic.education@lwvpgh.org. Address and details will be emailed to you.

August and September TBA. Various University Voter Registration Events. These will be announced as they are scheduled.

Sat. Sept. 7, 8:15 am – 11:15 am, **Out of Darkness Walk Voter Registration** for Suicide Prevention and Support. [Highmark Stadium, 510 W. Station Square Dr., 15219](#). Email Judy Clack to volunteer: voterservice@lwvpgh.org. Full details will be emailed to you including table location and parking information.

Sat. Sept. 7, Shifts: 8:30 am – 10:30 am or 10:30 am – 1 pm. **Recovery Walk Voter Registration** for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Recovery and Support. [1201 Waterfront Place, Pittsburgh, 15222](#). Event and parking are in the lots across from Heinz History Center: Email Judy Clack with preferred shift: voterservice@lwvpgh.org. Full details will be emailed to you including table location.



The rain stopped in time for us to erect our canopy and enjoy Mellon Park at their annual Arbor Day Celebration on April 27. We distributed a lot of Your Government Officials pamphlets, and Voting Resources You Need postcards. Left to right: Diana Hull, Julie Zavon, Kathleen Flaherty, and Susan Minton. Not pictured are Jane Butler and Judy Clack.

Sept. and Oct., TBA. Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank,

Walk-Up and Drive-Up Food events with LWVPGH voter education document distribution. GPCFB has not printed their dates yet. Kathy Herbst, kathy.herbst@lwvpgh.org, will announce them later in the summer.

Sept. and Oct., TBA: Packing Bee and Delivery of Door Hangers, Sr. Outreach Committee. Linda Schneider, linda.schneider@lwvpgh.org, will announce these dates later in the summer.

Oct., TBA, Candidate Forums and Meet and Greets, 12th & 17th Congressional Forums; State Representatives "Eat, Meet, and Greet." Judy Clack, voterservice@lwvpgh.org, will announce them as they are scheduled.

BOOK CLUB REPORT by Joan Cucinotta

UPCOMING MEETINGS

For our next meeting, we are reading Barbara McQuade's *Attack from Within: How Disinformation is Sabotaging America* (in which she has a wonderful chapter on the use of tech and A.I. on elections). We will meet at the Sixth Presbyterian Church at 1688 Murray Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15217 (at the corner of Murray and Forbes in Squirrel Hill. Entrance is on Murray Ave). May 17, 10:30 A.M.

From the April meeting and discussion about Artificial Intelligence

For April's meeting, we Book Club members endeavored to educate ourselves on the topic of A.I., artificial intelligence. Here is some of what we learned about this ever-developing new technology.

First of all, "A.I." is itself a broad word with many aspects. Essentially, it refers to a field of research in computer science to develop programs and software that can make intelligent machines. Even though we may not fully understand it, we have all been using A.I. in some form for many years --- Google Search, Siri, Alexa, recommendation systems within Netflix, Amazon, and most recently ChatGBT. Essentially, something run with A.I. has been fed a massive amount of data and then produces an answer to a requested directive. A breakdown of some important terms in A.I. can be found [here](#).

While we may be comfortable with its power to select a film or a book to suit our specific tastes, A.I. is now being used in an astonishing number of unimaginable ways. It can predict cancer from a [mammogram better than a human](#); lethal autonomous [AI-equipped drones](#) can be deployed without a human pulling the trigger; it can even [analyze a baseball batter's performance](#) and produce better insights to refine the player's techniques. Here in Pittsburgh, you may have seen those cute [little food delivery robots](#) bringing Grubhub food to Pitt students in Oakland. But despite the charming aspects, there are some very dangerous applications of A.I. at present. For example, it can also produce deep-fake videos to sway voters in an [election campaign](#), an activity that is an [existential danger to democracy](#).

Because A.I. seems to be the future of any and everything humans do, big spenders are throwing enormous amounts of money into building research centers, data centers, and all their necessary infrastructure. [Saudi Arabia is investing billions](#) in A.I. technology and development. The Facebook company Meta alone plans to spend [40 billion](#). But along with privacy and disinformation issues that A.I. development raises is the [environmental impact of the massive data centers](#) which require enormous amounts of water.

Many in our group see A.I. as an unsettling new entry in the dizzying race to build new technologies and have registered alarm at its unknown consequences and potential for misuse. Yet most of us are cautiously optimistic as long as proper guardrails are in place. Like any new technology, A.I. needs human oversight geared toward positive human outcomes and must outpace the race toward profiteering by corporations as well as power grabbing by unscrupulous politicians manipulating elections.

While you can read about A.I. almost daily in any prominent newspaper, here are a few sources that might be helpful in learning more about it. There is a PBS Series called ["Crash Course: Artificial Intelligence"](#), and an interesting article ["Among the A. I. Domsayers"](#) by Andrew Marantz. There is also the highly [Informative League webinar](#) by Eileen Olmstead and Ruth Quint about the connections between A.I. and the ballot box. Two recommended books are *Burn Book: A Tech Love Story* by Kara Swisher about the high tech community and *Radically Human: How New Technology Is Transforming Business and Shaping Our Future* by Paul Daugherty and H. James Wilson

And by the way, how can you be sure who actually wrote this article? Joan Cucinotta or ChatGBT?

Another note on the next page

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Also of note is the [Greater Pittsburgh Festival of Books](#) | Saturday, May 11, 2024 | 10 AM - 5 PM/ Location: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 616 North Highland Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15206.

"The Greater Pittsburgh Festival of Books is a free event in East Liberty that celebrates the city's rich literary community and love of reading. Poets, authors, book enthusiasts and more gather at the GPFB to pay tribute to Pittsburgh's growing literary reputation. The festival features nationally renowned authors with ties to Pittsburgh, dozens of poets, children's activities, book and comic stores, entertainment, publishers and more. All ages are welcome to attend – from children to senior citizens and everyone in between." Martha Raak attended last year and reports that "it is fun and interesting." [Register here](#).

LWVPGH Officers / Executive Committee		Local Area Meeting Chairs	
President (and Advocacy)	Michele 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	Laryn Finder
V.P.3 Development	Nancy Naragon		
V.P.4 Program	Barbara Grabowski		
Secretary	Kathy Herbst		
Treasurer	Bridget McDonald		
Directors		Interest & Service Area Specialists	
Advocacy	Tracy A. Battle	Election Integrity	Ron Bandes
Membership, Naturalization	Judy Diorio	VOTER Editor	Sue Broughton
Social media	Emily Ferri	Book Club	Joan Cucinotta
Publicity & Public Relations	Tené Croom	Gov. relations, Outreach	Jackie Dixon
Civic Education	Amy Kleissas	Pres emerita, Leg update	Maureen Grosheider
Webmaster	Ruth Quint	Science and Environment	Don Naragon
Budget	Ellie Siegal	Blast	Eileen Olmsted
		Vote411 & Voter Guides	Annette Shimer
		Vote411 & VG assistant	Michelle Zmianac
Staff			
Community Information Center	Manager: Jenna Latour Nichols	Marcellus Shale Grant	Manager: Heather Harr
League Phone Numbers, Websites, and Social Media			
Greater Pittsburgh	412-261-4284	lwvpgh.org	
Pennsylvania	717-234-1576 Ext 0	palwv.org	
National	202-429-1965	lwv.org	
Facebook	www.facebook.com	Search: League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh	