



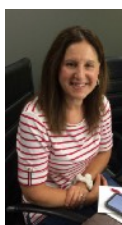
League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

VOTER

Volume 28, No. 1

September 2021

PROGRAM by Cris Beuger, Program Chair



Mark your calendar for our 2021-2022 Annual Kick-Off for Wednesday, Sept 22nd, 7:00 pm. Linda Wigington discusses how our greatest exposure to outdoor particle pollution occurs while we are indoors. Learn why particle pollution is a health concern. Find out what has been learned from low-cost particle monitoring of 400 homes in Southwest PA through the ROCIS (Reducing Outdoor Contaminants in Indoor Spaces) Low Cost Monitoring Project (LCMP). The LMCP involves 12 to 15 participants in a month-long virtual air quality monitoring cohort. The ROCIS team guides the cohort in using low-cost air quality monitors in their home or workplace. Throughout the process, ROCIS provides technical support, management of the inventory of monitors, data analysis, and visualization tools. Building operation, occupant behavior, and technical interventions can have a significant impact on indoor particle pollution. Explore strategies to reduce intrusion of outdoor pollutants into homes, as well as options to address indoor-generated sources and learn what is involved in participating in the Fall 2021 Cohort. Linda provides indoor air quality and residential energy consulting services through her firm, Linda Wigington and Associates. She brings 30 years of building performance experience to her role as the leader of the Pittsburgh, PA-based ROCIS initiative funded by The Heinz Endowments. Find out more about the program at <http://rocis.org>.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER PITTSBURGH COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI)

Terrie Griffin, Chair and President LWVPA

ANNOUNCEMENT - CALL FOR PARTICIPATION



If you have experience in DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) training or are interested in "equity for all" please consider becoming a member of the DEI Committee of the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh. When we receive your expression of interest, we will plan a Zoom meeting to discuss local needs, resources, and training opportunities in concert with the Equity Initiative of the LWVPA. As a committee member you will be a resource for your Unit. Please send me an email expressing your interest and experience if any. Together we will develop a plan of action that is unique to our needs and effective with community partnerships and programs. My email address is: dei@lwvpgh.org. Thank you in advance for your interest.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ELECTIONS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER – REALLY!



I hope that everyone had a relaxing and fun-filled summer and enjoyed time with family and friends.

Are you all rested and ready to tackle the upcoming election season?

The November ballot will be filled with incredibly important races – from Supreme Court, Superior, Commonwealth, and Common Pleas Court to all-important municipal and school board races. Sign up to watch a question-and-answer session on September 20 conducted by Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts [here](#) with appellate court candidates. Once again, LWVPGH will be posting information about candidates for the Court of Common Pleas.

At the state level, even though both chambers of the Pennsylvania Legislature are in recess until September, a number of hearings are being conducted regarding reapportionment and redistricting. The initial census data was released, and, as expected, the population numbers warrant a decrease in congressional representation. The state House and Senate are each holding hearings to hear citizen concerns about Congressional redistricting. They are also accepting written comments; so if you'd like to weigh in on your concerns about how to redraw Congressional districts, click [here](#).

Redistricting of the state house and state senate is also occurring and is the work of the Legislative Reapportionment Commission, chaired by Mark Nordenberg. Information about the hearings the LRC is conducting as well as methods of providing input to them are available [here](#).

And, then, of course on the national level, LWV is active in advocating for improvements to election law to ensure that all eligible voters can vote and have their votes counted fairly. The League has come out strongly in support of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and is rallying at the White house in late August.

For those of you who haven't checked out our website, please do. It's www.lwvpg.org. While you can read through all that's on our public pages, members can find much more material if they log in. Log in information can be found by going to the upper right corner of our Home Page and clicking on the Member Log In box.

Cris Beuger has planned an exciting kick-off meeting for September and some interesting speakers and events planned for future months. Hope to see all of you at one or more of them.

Maureen Grosheider

HEARINGS ON CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING by Sue Broughton



The State Government Committee of the PA House of Representatives is holding a series of eight hearings across the state to gather public input on redistricting for Congress.

The committee is seeking information about how Congressional districts affect Pennsylvania residents locally. The schedule of these hearings is at <http://www.paredistricting.com/hearingschedule>. The first three were held August 24, 25 and 26 in Western Pennsylvania. At that link is a list of the remaining five hearings to be held in September and October in the eastern and central parts of the state. Below that are links to the completed hearings. Clicking on one of those links brings up a page that has a map showing the region the hearing covered and links to watch the hearing video, see the agenda and the written testimony of the speakers (turned in a week before the hearing), and to submit written testimony.

Six members of LWVPGH presented testimony: Nancy Naragon speaking officially for LWVPGH; and Connie Hester, Rosemary Prostko, Barbara Grover, Maureen Grosheider and myself speaking as individuals.

Continued next page

Volume 28, No 1

September 2021

Published monthly except January, June and August by

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh
436 Seventh Ave., Suite 350
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412-261-4284

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

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Pennsylvania	717-234-1576	palwv.org	
National	202-429-1965	lwv.org	
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Nancy Naragon made a series of points that are important to the League. The process should:

- Include specific timelines for the steps leading to a redistricting plan
- Inform the public in a transparent and open manner
- Provide full disclosure throughout the process and public hearings, most particularly on the plan proposed for adoption including time for citizens to comment on proposed maps
- Be subject to open meeting laws – meaning that all testimony, whether written or provided orally should be available to the public in an easily accessible method
- Disclose names and credentials of any mapping experts utilized, who must be non-partisan
- Provide the reasoning behind the map any proposed map

The plan should be based on standards:

- Districts of substantially equal population within a geographic contiguity
- Effective representation of racial and linguistic minorities
- Preservation and protection of “communities of interest”
- Respect for boundaries of municipalities, school districts and counties
- Compactness
- No protection of incumbents or preferential treatment for a political party

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Standing Meetings

Board Meetings

- ✓ **Second Monday** of the month.
Lunch at 11:30 a.m., at Einstein Bagels in the Koppers Building.
Meeting: 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. in the LWVGP CIC (office) conference room at 436 Seventh Ave., Suite 350

Local Area Unit Meetings

- ✓ **Pittsburgh Central:** 2nd Friday, 1:30 p.m. at the Squirrel Hill Public Library, 5801 Forbes Ave., Pgh. PA 15217. Contact Martha Raak at 412-477-7572 or marbiker1@gmail.com
- ✓ **North Hills:** 3rd Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. at St Paul's Methodist Church at 1965 Ferguson Road in Hampton. Contact Nancy Mott at 412-779-3089 or namott001@gmail.com
- ✓ **South Hills:** 1st Thursday, 12:30 p.m. at the Mt. Lebanon Public Library, 16 Castle Shannon Blvd., Pgh, PA 15228 (unless otherwise announced). Contact Maureen Mamula at 412-760-9642 or mamula159@hotmail.com

Other Ongoing Meetings

- ✓ **Education Committee**
Committee is reorganizing. Chair is Kathy Nagle, education@lwvpgh.org or 1-814-241-8149
Meeting date TBD.
- ✓ **Voter Service Committee**
1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 12:30 pm. Contact Judy Clack at 512-731-0280
voterservice@lwvpgh.org
- ✓ **Gun Safety Committee**
Dates TBD. Contact Nancy Naragon at 412-366-2446 or development@lwvpgh.org
- ✓ **Non-fiction Book Club**
3rd Friday, 10:15 am. Contact Joan Cucinotta, 412-708-2335 or joancucinotta@gmail.com

JULY-AUGUST CALENDAR

September

31 Aug Tue	Voter Service Committee meeting, 12:30-2:30 pm on Zoom
3 Fri	Voter registration, Carnegie Mellon University Undergraduate Activity Fair
11 Sat	Voter registration, Pittsburgh Recovery Walk (Addiction Support),
12 Sun	Voter registration, Out of Darkness Walk (Suicide Prevention)
13 Mon	Board meeting by Zoom, 12:30 pm
17 Fri	Non-Fiction Book Club, 10:30 am, Anderson Shelter
20 Mon	Appellate Court Forum, 7-8:30 pm on Zoom
22 Wed	2021-2022 Annual Kickoff Meeting, 7:00 pm
28 Tue	National Voter Registration Day, city and county libraries
29 Wed	Education Committee, 7:00 pm on Zoom

I had been placed first on the agenda. I emphasized the importance of a fair process and traced the evolution of District 12 from 1991 through 2011 to show the results an unfair process, a graphic example that laid groundwork for several other speakers. Connie, speaking as a lifelong Republican, emphasized the value of a society working for the common good and her regret that today our society does not work that way, citing gerrymandering as part of the problem. Rosemary noted the excessive influence of campaign donors and pointed to gerrymandered districts as encouraging this influence. Barbara's concerns were the increasing absence of competitive races in many districts, the lack of easy access for citizens to information about the process, and the failure of the House and Senate to hold joint hearings.

Last on the agenda, Maureen re-emphasized many points made by the previous speakers. She called attention to another problem mentioned by some speakers – the location of the hearing in a building outside Bridgeville almost inaccessible to anyone without a car, requiring a long bus trip and a long walk from the bus stop. There were many other interesting speakers, including one who used humor effectively. Many speakers elaborated on the drafts they had submitted. The video is well worth two hours of your time. Written testimony may be submitted until October 13.

NEW MEMBERS

North Hills

Jean Barker
barker259@comcast.net

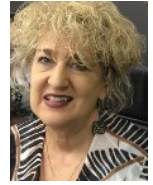
Mary Hancock
maryelizabethhancock@gmail.com

Julia Kant
juliegkant@gmail.com

Barbara Lustig
barbara.lustig@outlook.com

CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY by Amy Kleissas, Chair

A new presentation is scheduled for classrooms at Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Duquesne University. As part of this lesson, we used this list of **citizen responsibilities** from the **National Conference of State Legislatures**. **Citizens should:**



1. Participate in the democratic process
2. Respect and obey federal, state and local laws
3. Respect rights, beliefs and opinions of others
4. Participate in their local communities

“Support, defend, respect, participate” — actions that seem to be more important than ever in these challenging times. We hope to facilitate some meaningful conversations with these students highlighting the need for the continual civic engagement of everyday citizens. Before our next election season begins, and while the redistricting efforts are underway, perhaps this is a good time to reflect on the ways we can ramp up our own civic engagement.

The idea of “the Common Good” was a concept well-known to the founding fathers. In our divided society, maybe thinking about “Common Ground” is better. See this infographic “[We the People](#)” for more. **To share, please copy this link into your browser: www.lwvpgh.org/docs.ashx?id=844326**

Other News: We are sending emails to 40+ school districts to schedule classroom lessons and will include links to our resources. While the situation for schools is increasingly complicated, we hope to provide classroom-ready materials to schools and cross our fingers for visits.

We are working on several new projects that will carry into 2022, like new videos for social media, “Facts for Citizens” posters with QR code for libraries, a new membership project for students, continued collaboration and support of community groups, and in collaboration with Carnegie Libraries, a Civics Bee.

A graphic for an event. At the top left is the logo for 'PENNSYLVANIANS FOR MODERN COURTS' featuring a scale of justice. To its right is the logo for the 'Free LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA' with the word 'Free' in red. Below these is a banner with a background of American flags and the text 'APPELLATE COURTS CANDIDATES' FORUM'. At the bottom is a dark blue box with white text: 'September 20, 2021 | 7:00 PM' and 'Virtual Forum | Zoom'.

Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts and the Free Library of Philadelphia will host a virtual forum with the candidates for all of Pennsylvania's appellate courts, including the Supreme Court, Superior Court and Commonwealth Court. LWVPA is a co-sponsor of this event.

All of the candidates on the ballot will participate. Register to get the Zoom link. Registered attendees may submit questions for the candidates.

[Register for Zoom link](#)

VOTER SERVICE by Judy Clack, Voter Service Chair



In-person voter registration drives are back. Contact Judy Clack, voterservice@lwvpgh.org, if you may be able to volunteer. A specific link to register for each event will be sent to you along with detailed information via email thereafter. The first three events are outdoors. Fully vaccinated members may volunteer.

Fri. Sept. 3, Carnegie Mellon University Undergraduate Activity Fair, CMU Campus, Jared Cohon University Center, 5032 Forbes Ave., 11 am – 2 pm.

Sat. Sept. 11, Pittsburgh Recovery Walk (Addiction Support), Alco Parking Lot at 11th and Waterfront, 1101 Smallman, 15222, from 9 am to 1 pm

Sun. Sept. 12, Out of Darkness Walk (Suicide Prevention), Highmark Stadium, 510 W. Station Square Dr., 15219, 8:30 – 11:30 am

Tues. Sept. 28, National Voter Registration Day, dozens of city and county libraries, times vary, Covid restrictions may apply indoors.

Candidate forums for the local judicial and municipal races are being planned for late September and early October. The League's video gallery for the 15 candidates running for 9 positions for Allegheny County Common Pleas judge will be updated. Forums for seven school board races that have 7 or 8 candidates competing for 4 positions will be organized for Avonworth, Bethel Park, Moon, Mt. Lebanon, North Allegheny, Penn Hills, and Plum. We are also planning a forum for Pittsburgh mayor and Pittsburgh City Council District 4. Forums for the three contested Magisterial Judge races will be arranged for the Fox Chapel Area, Mt. Lebanon/Dormont, and Pittsburgh Wards 26/27. We are arranging co-sponsorships with these organizations: National Pan-Hellenic Council (African-American Fraternities and Sororities), Pittsburgh Black Lawyers Affiliation, as well as our ongoing relationships with the B-PEP and VEEEM. Email Judy Clack, voterservice@lwvpgh.org if you are willing to help in any capacity.

A Candidate Forum for All PA Appellate Courts (Supreme Court, Superior Court and Commonwealth Court) will be held on Zoom on Monday, September 20, 7 – 8:00 pm. It has been organized by Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts and the Free Library of Philadelphia and **co-hosted by LWVPA**. Register to view it live [at this link](#). A link to the recording will be available afterwards.

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_4bdDL5-nShmsHgHXAEiP6A

Nine members of the **Food Pantry Committee** held a rack card packing bee on Saturday, August 14 on the porch of chair, **Kathy Herbst's** home. See photos. 16,000 cards were packaged for delivery to the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank (GPCFB) who in turn will distribute the packages to over 140 food pantries in Allegheny County. One card of fall voting and election information will be placed in each family's box of food in September.

The **Religious Outreach Committee** has been reorganized and we thank **Marilyn Mulvihill** for taking over leadership of these efforts. Contact Marilyn Mulvihill, mimi15143@yahoo.com, if you're interested in helping with this outreach. We need names of religious entities and email addresses to which we can forward voting and election information.

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Counting out voter information cards to go to 16,000 families served by the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank are Kathy Herbst (Chair), Susanne Fox, Amy Kleissas, and Lora Medwid. Kathy drove all the packaged cards to the GPCFB!



Volunteering at the Food Pantry Packing Bee were Betsy Mullough, Lynne Preisser, Julie Kant, and Christine Peters. They counted the cards, wrapped them in a cover letter, and labeled each package with the food pantry name.

Four League members were able to participate in three **naturalization ceremonies** on August 19 at the USCIS Penn Center location for the first time since March 2020. No guests were allowed, and masks and social distancing were required. The number of volunteers allowed was greatly reduced from our pre-Covid experience. We hope to be invited to attend again. Meanwhile, LWVPGH materials are inserted in each new citizen's packet by USCIS staff. **Judy Diorio** is chairing our efforts. See photos.

The next meeting of the Voter Service Committee will be **Tues. Aug. 31, 12:30 – 2:30 pm on Zoom**. All members are invited. Email Judy Clack to receive the Agenda and Zoom Invitation: voterservice@lwvpgh.org. Or, find the link on the LWVPGH website. Sign in as a member and then click on the Calendar for the link. (This meeting is in lieu of our normal first Tuesday meeting on Sept. 7 which is Rosh Hashanah. Additional Sept. meetings will be scheduled.)

The **Senior Subsidized Housing Committee** has also reorganized with co-chairs, **Linda Schneider** and **Nancy Mott**, with the initial chair, **Jane Butler**, providing significant mentorship. This group will design, print, and distribute large-font door hangers for senior residents. A future goal is to develop in-person or virtual presentations. Contact Linda Schneider, schneiderlinda@comcast.net, if you're interested in this outreach. Help is needed in making phone calls to housing managers and doing some data entry.



Judy Diorio speaking at the naturalization ceremony.



Lynne Preisser speaking at the naturalization ceremony.



Doug Spindler speaking at the naturalization ceremony.

PA SCHOOL FUNDING 101 by Kathy Nagle

"If people do not believe that mathematics is simple, it is only because they do not realize how complicated life is." -John von Neumann

Fair Funding – it seems simple enough, mathematically speaking. Pennsylvania has 500 school districts. Give everyone their fair share needed to be successful. After all, PA has had a Fair Funding Formula since 2016.

The 2016 Fair Funding Formula is:

1. Based on a school district's student population
2. Weighted based on student need (e.g., number of students living in poverty; number of English Language Learners)
3. Weighted for the number of students enrolled in charter schools
4. Adjusted with consideration given to school district-based factors (e.g., local tax effort, median household income index)

Make sense? Seem simple? We have a formula! Just use the formula. It's a good formula that would work well if it weren't for the complicated part: Not all Basic Education Funding (BEF) is distributed through the Fair Funding Formula. In fact, only about 11% of the BEF has been distributed using the formula. The majority of the BEF is distributed according to a practice known as "hold-harmless." Since 1992-93 "hold harmless" has meant that a school district could not get *less* than what it received the previous year. So, any new money is added to the guaranteed previous year's amount and nothing is ever subtracted. With the passing of the 2016 Fair Funding Formula, PA froze the hold-harmless amount for each district at the amount each received in 2014-15. That means that each district is annually guaranteed the amount it received in 2014-15 with only *new* funding distributed through the Fair Funding Formula. To complicate matters further, the 2014-15 levels are based on enrollment data from the 1990-91 school year independent of current student populations.

The overall result of "hold-harmless" is that many (about 86%) of our students are not getting the funding that they need and deserve. Money matters and schools need adequate resources in order for students to be successful. They need enough teachers, counselors, reading specialists, nurses. They need access to current technologies and science labs. They need art and music. They need safe and healthy facilities. They need fair funding.

The most underfunded districts spend on average \$4800 less per pupil than the wealthiest districts spend. A recent analysis done by Penn State Professor Matthew Kelly revealed that an additional \$4.6 billion would be needed to adequately and fairly educate PA students. On June 30, PA passed its 2021-22 budget to include a \$200 million increase to the Fair Funding Formula fund, and \$100 million going to PA's 100 poorest school districts. A step in the right direction, but not enough. Funding gaps will still exist.

What's next? A group of 6 school districts, the NAACP-PA, the PA Association of Rural and Small Schools, and five public school parents filed a lawsuit against the state in 2014. The petitioners allege that the Pennsylvania General Assembly violated the state constitution by failing to provide adequate and equitable state funding for education. The court date has finally been scheduled for September 9. The outcome of this historic case could reshape the future of public-school funding and provide fairness regardless of a student's zip code. Let's hope it does. Stay tuned.

The Education Committee will meet by Zoom on Wednesday, Sept 29 at 7:00 PM.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS::

Shale & Public Health conference: November 16 & 17, Noon-4 pm
A virtual event featuring the latest research presented by the researchers

BOOK CLUB REPORT by Joan Cucinotta

NEWS

We will meet next on September 17 in the Anderson Shelter. At that meeting, we should address whether/when we want to return to meeting in the library or resume meeting by zoom.

We reviewed some ideas for our next reading and settled on ***How to Hide an Empire by Daniel Immerwahr***. (Book blurb - "By the beginning of World War II, 19 million people—more than 1 in 10 Americans—lived in American colonial possessions. By the war's end, more people lived under American jurisdiction outside the mainland than on it. Immerwahr pulls back the curtain on the American empire, from the Philippines to Guantanamo Bay, and John Lennon to Osama bin Laden, and offers a fresh new look at how American colonialism changed the country and the world. As of this writing, there are 9 of 14 copies available in the library. Although there are ebook and audio copies, they are on the waitlist.

MEETING SUMMARY

We began our meeting with our guest speaker Scott Bell (Than you, Judy Schryer!), principal oboist for the PSO and currently on the faculty of the Tianjin-Juilliard school in China.

Having lived and worked in China, Scott was informative and engaging about contemporary life there. There are several aspects that he appreciates. In his field of music and the arts, he sees a great thirst for the way Western arts and music are practiced and understood (and often doused with political push-back). Scott had high praise for China's vigorous commitment to infrastructure citing enormous new airports, extensive road systems, and support for rapid intercity rail transportation. During a hospital visit there he noticed that despite some spartan room conditions, the operating room was filled with gleaming, high-tech equipment. Of course, the security issues are another thing. Scott has to use a VPN to get around China's firewall. He can get a cable package that includes CNN through Huawei, the national telecom company, but somehow, whenever a sensitive subject comes on, the signal drops. Scott also had to navigate China's extensive bureaucracy. He was trained to avoid discussion or reference to politics in any of his presentations or classes, his teaching plans had to pass muster with the party official in charge, and his travel plans had to be extensively reviewed. Nonetheless, teaching and performing in China has been an invigorating experience for him. Several of Scott's points were supported by what other members had read. *China in Ten Words* by Yu Hua offered insights into what energizes and really characterizes a population of 1.3 billion people. "The Voice of China" by Alex Palmer (NYTimes Mag 7.11.21) highlights a Chinese diplomat apparently taking cues from the Trump playbook.

BOOK REVIEW

The Hundred Year Marathon, a book pushing for a more forceful response to the threat that China now poses to the United States, was written by Michael Pillsbury, currently Director of the Center on Chinese Strategy at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C.

Essentially, the book seeks to disabuse current US misperceptions about China: that it is on the road to democracy, that it desires only to be a regional power in Asia, and that it continues to need our assistance for that goal. Because he has great fluency in Chinese and familiarity with the context for Chinese-issued documents, he seeks to correct that misperception. China, he believes, is on the road to 'authoritarian capitalism' and is simply using our naivete to achieve world domination. China is working on the book's title, *Hundred Year Marathon*, with plans to supersede western dominance by 2049, the 100th anniversary of China's birth. The plan is steeped in Chinese traditions.

We are all familiar with the Confucian tradition in China, espousing benevolence and humanism. But the other side of that is the tradition comes from the Warring States, a period fundamental in Chinese history but generally unfamiliar in the West. Occurring between 400-200 BCE, it was a time of heavy conflict that ultimately led to the establishment of the Qin dynasty when China was first unified under one ruler.

One of the principal strategies from this period is called the "Assassin's Weapon" in which you don't let the enemy know you are its rival. Instead of trying to match US military power, which is what brought down the

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USSR, the focus employs an asymmetrical approach (for example, create malware and tech spying, find ways to hack and disrupt communication and satellite destruction, use submarines to disrupt critical logistics and oil supply). This soft-touch approach was even apparent in Hu Jintao's statement that "it will be easier to buy Taiwan than to conquer it." So rather than take Taiwan back by force expending a great number of resources, create economic 'incentives' that will show Taiwan the value of joining up with the mainland.

Pillsbury documents several instances in which China has used this oblique approach to its own gain over the US: Larry Chin, employed by the CIA during the entire Cold War, was regularly passing on critical information to China; China, not Nixon, initiated the historic visit simply as a way for them to deal with the USSR; after this opening, China flooded the US with students pursuing degrees in science and engineering who brought their new knowledge back home.

Our information, or bungling of information, has led the US to grossly miscalculate several world events: the CIA believed that China wouldn't enter Korean War simply because it said it wouldn't, the CIA believed the Soviets when they said they wouldn't send missiles to Cuba, they believed that the Shah of Iran would stay in power, and they didn't see Tiananmen coming.

Pillsbury explains that China's duplicity has also made it constantly paranoid and vigorously watchful. Deng Xiao Ping thought that Tiananmen Square was orchestrated by the US using psychological experiments. That the USSR collapsed at the same time only cemented this idea, and this fear, into the mindset of the Politburo.

Pillsbury does offer guidance, however. He urges the US to more directly fund democracy in China, support Chinese dissidents, develop a competitive (not supportive) strategy, start measuring outcomes from programs, and encourage a coalition of China's surrounding countries that could serve US interests.

Marvelous Members The Wise Women (and Men) of the League

I interviewed 50-year member, Laryn Finder. At this summer's Juneteenth registration event, Laryn had the most dynamic League voter registration style that I've ever seen! Truly! She is modest and funny and the salt of the earth and emblematic of the diverse, awesome, and marvelous members of the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh.

--Amy Kleissas 8.17.2



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

I was born in Altoona, PA, which had the largest railroad roundtable in the world and the famous horseshoe curve. I had brilliant parents and one brother. And then they had me. I found my husband there, too. Because of my Jewish heritage, I grew up to be quiet. One teacher told me to always use my first name when I signed things, because they wouldn't know if I was male or female and I would get better results that way.

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

I loved all of my teachers, but was afraid of my physics teacher. Math was my major, but I waited in college until the very last class in my last semester to take a key Physics course because of that fear...but I passed.

At that time, you had to be either a secretary or teacher – I spent one semester making a scrapbook – so I decided neither of those worked for me.

3. What is your professional or work history, if any?

I became a statistician and worked for the Coal Research Lab. I would pray every night that my figures were right and that the lab wouldn't blow up when they were doing research. My boss was not much of a mentor;

Continued next page

he came in, put his feet up on the desk, and slept every day. Of course, my desk was right there in the same room with him. I really needed the job while my husband finished dental school. When I got pregnant that ended that because at the time, you couldn't work if you were pregnant.

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

In 1968 we moved to the house we still live in. I became friends with a neighbor who was in the League. I had joined the AAUW, but the League sounded a lot better so I thought I'd give it a flying chance. I loved it immediately! The people were so articulate – no baby talk – and we were doing things and we were educating ourselves. I will never ever forget the study we did on anti-ballistic missiles. I knew everything there was to know about anti-ballistic missiles!

5. Who was a notable or first League mentor to you?

I most admire my friend Annette Shimer. She is a shining star who I've always looked up to. She's just marvelous. There are and were all different kinds of people in the League. I was always so quiet in my hometown, but in the League it didn't matter who you were – you were accepted.

6. What was/is your League "portfolio," including offices you held?

I was the treasurer for another organization, and I went to an annual League meeting, and I was new. They needed a treasurer and I thought, "you have to be a nitwit not to be a treasurer." So, I was treasurer for years until computers came into use. That was too much for me and I passed it on to Mary Larsen. I have to say something good about her; her whole life was beautiful. We would laugh, because I was and still am a "paper person" and I would bug her to use paper.

Even though I was treasurer for several years, I'm a worker bee, not a queen bee. I didn't want to be a chair, or hold an office, or be in charge.

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

My voter service. I think maybe I was in charge of Voter Service for the Upper St Clair unit. We are doing tremendous work with schools now, but back then I worked with a Social Studies teacher in the Upper St. Clair high school and registered students long before it was the thing to do. None of the other units were doing it at that time in the 70's.

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

That we should become a nation of people and not of parties, not of factions. I'm so distressed by the schisms and I want it to go away. I want for us to become the United States of America.

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

See #8! I'm low key. Just let me do my thing.