

## THE COMMUNICATOR

### LWVPA Presidential Priorities - Meeting with Presidents & More

By Terrie E. Griffin, D. Min., M.Div., M.H.S. President, LWVPA Board of Directors



Dear League Members,

Great news! Our first of four quarterly Zoom meetings with LWVPA presidents and leaders was held on August 3, 2021, with twenty-two (22) presidents and leaders responding to our invitation. That was an impressive start. After everyone introduced themselves and their League, I asked them to share one thing that no one knows about them as an ice-breaker. To our delight, we have a former professional clown among us, a member who worked at a Dairy Queen in Germany that served beer, and several members whose League experience spans 30 plus years.

The threefold purpose of the meeting was to: 1) listen to concerns, if any; 2) share best practices that can be replicated; and 3) determine how the State board can better respond to complex or controversial issues through our [Committee for Support](#). This committee provides support on DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion)-related issues/training and capacity-building (e.g., understanding and applying parliamentary procedures, board development, developing a mission impact action plan, organizational development, etc.).

Throughout the discussion, several interesting things occurred. Voter services, civic education and engagement were the top priorities for most Leagues. Also, leaders recognized the need to connect with each other. Sharing best practices and how we can better equip our constituents to address critical race theory, voter suppression challenges and election review shams are front and center as we approach upcoming elections.

As we concluded our time together, the Presidents and leaders were asked to appoint members from their League to serve on the LWVPA statewide portfolio committees. The portfolios are: Voter Services, Environment, Social Policy, Membership, Equity, Government Policy, Development, and Civic Education. Each president was given a description of the portfolios along with a form to complete on each appointee. Once appointed, the statewide committee member will be contacted by the Director. Dates will be provided on meetings and times. The committee will be responsible for the planning and development of an action plan based on local League needs.

**More good news - Prison Gerrymandering.** The Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC) voted 3 to 2 in favor of a resolution to reallocate prison data to count incarcerated people in their home communities. For over a year, the LWVPA and Fair Districts PA have been collaborating and sponsoring regional forums, submitting joint letters, and encouraging supporters to submit online comments and testimony in an effort to win over commissioners. Read my op-ed in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on this topic [here](#).

Our efforts were successful. Thanks to everyone who supported this effort!

Let's continue "Building our Power Together!"

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## Upcoming League Events

### **LWVPA Slack Tutorial - How and Why We Use It!**

**Thursday, September 2nd, 2021 at 4PM**

Curious about using Slack? Join us on Thursday, September 2nd for a tutorial on using Slack from our Policy & Communications Fellow, Gaby Hartney. This event will be virtual via zoom, if you are unable to attend, the recording will published on the LWVPA website for reference. No advance registration required - [Join us at this link.](#)

### **School Funding Webinar**

**Thursday, September 9th, 2021 at 11:00 AM**

Pennsylvania's constitution states that the General Assembly must "provide a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth." Instead, the state has adopted an irrational and inequitable system of funding public education that does not provide the resources students need to meet state standards and discriminates against students based on where they live and the wealth of their local communities. Deborah Gordon Klehr, the executive director of the Education Law Center (ELC), is hosting a webinar open to all League members to learn more about the ELC's pending lawsuit and ways to get involved leading up to the trial. [Register here.](#)

### **LWV Climate Group: Wildfires Webinar**

**Hosted by LWV-US Climate Interest Group/Wildfire Team**

**Thursday, September 9th, 2021 at 2 PM EDT**

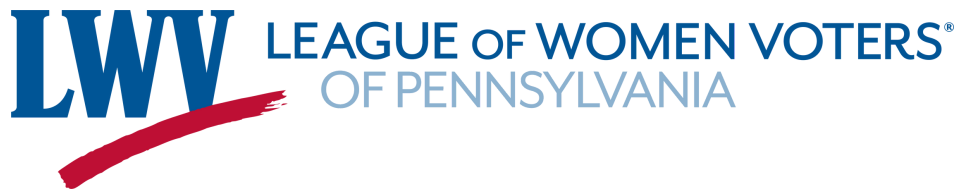
Wildfires are a problem, and they are becoming hotter, larger, and more frequent, especially in the western United States. Wildfires destroy lives, livelihoods and property. And to make it worse, they exacerbate climate change. Jessica Morse, Deputy Secretary for Forest and Wildfire Resilience at California Natural Resources Agency, will speak on what California is doing about wildfire mitigation and how California's efforts compare with other states. We'll also hear from community members - Terry Rodriguez, Ann Draper, Angela Torrens - who will share success stories about how local governments and citizenry can join forces to mitigate wildfire threats. [This is a Zoom meeting - click here](#) to register.

### **Pennsylvania Youth Voting Summit**

**Friday, September 17th, 2021 at 12 PM**

The 6th Pennsylvania Youth Voting Summit invites high school and college students, faculty and administrators, and partners actively engaged in the youth voting space to come together for a day of civic learning and reflection, organizing and networking. Each year, the Secretary of the Commonwealth speaks directly to young voters and the Summit hosts presenters that are experts in the youth voting space. [Register here for this virtual event.](#) Fair Districts PA chair Carol Kuniholm will facilitate a Testimony Training workshop from 12:45-1:15 PM. This workshop will help youth voters prepare their story of distorted districts and lost representation.

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## Upcoming League Events, Continued

### PA Appellate Courts Candidates Forum

**Monday, September 20th, 2021 at 7PM**

Join us for the PA Appellate Courts Candidates Forum hosted by Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts and the Free Library of Philadelphia to inform yourself about the judicial candidates on the ballot for the Pennsylvania General Election held on November 2, 2021. RSVP for the zoom event [here](#).

### Government Policy Team Meetings

**Third Tuesday of Every Month - September 21st at 7PM**

To provide an overview of committee activities to local League Board members who want to follow the committee activity more closely for updates and Q&A, but are unable to consistently participate in the work and process of the committee. [Register here](#).

### Antiracism Series: The Intersection of Race and Education

**Monday, September 27th, 2021 at 6PM**

LWVPA Equity Initiative in partnership with LWV Philly will offer a special anti-racism program on equitable school funding. What should you know about the school funding lawsuit, and what action steps must be taken to ensure every PA K-12 student has resources to succeed, regardless of community demographic, wealth, or geography? [Register here](#).

## Upcoming Events with Fair Districts PA (FDPA)

### FDPA Statewide Conference Call

**When:** Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 7PM

Regularly scheduled conference calls happen on the first Thursday of the month and are open to everyone interested in the ongoing effort. Call in: 712-770-5505/ Access code: 594190.

### Drawing Fair Maps

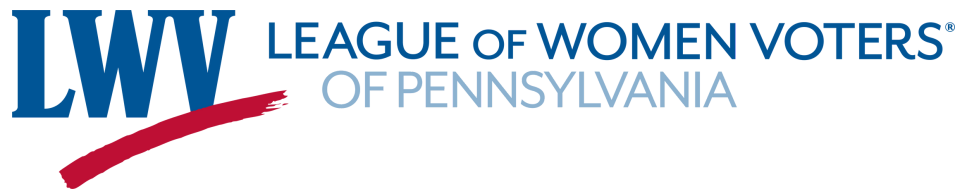
**When:** Tuesday, September 21, 2021 at 7PM

The Clarion County LWV is hosting a Community Mapping Conversation on Zoom. Fair Districts PA Speaker Debbie Trudeau will facilitate the conversation. We'll look at the problems related to the current redistricting process in Pennsylvania. We'll learn how to analyze maps, and we'll work on preparing testimony for the congressional and state legislative maps.

[Click here to register for the Zoom Link.](#)

***If you are interested in including a Local League event in the Communicator, please email [events@palwv.org](mailto:events@palwv.org) with the event, a brief description, and a point of contact.***

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## Executive Director's Update

By Meg Pierce

The State Office has had a busy summer and is looking forward to an active fall!

### Thank you, Gaby!

This week, our team bids a bittersweet farewell to Gaby Hartney, our Policy and Communications Fellow. Gaby worked for the League while pursuing her Master's in Public Administration from the University of Pennsylvania. She made significant contributions to the League, including supporting our 2021 Convention, revamping our communications platforms and website, and monitoring critical PA policy updates. Gaby recently graduated from Penn and was hired to join U.S. Representative Andy Kim's staff. We are thrilled for Gaby and are grateful for her time with the League!



### Fall Fellowship Opportunities:

LWVPA is seeking a Policy & Communications Fellow for the fall semester. The Policy and Communications fellowship is ideal for a Master's level student with a passion for state government and policy advocacy. Through this experience, a fellow will hone their writing and communications skills and be able to communicate important policy information to the public and members of the League across the state. For more information, including how to apply, visit our [website](#).

### GOTV Postcards:

The State League and the Voter Services Committee are excited to announce that free "Get Out The Vote" postcards are available to all local Leagues! Great for mailing to members or handing out at events, these cards contain important information about voting and the Fall 2021 elections.

If your local League would like to request postcards, fill out this [form here](#). We'll send them to your League office for distribution. Please note these will be sent to your League's mailing address. You will be responsible for distribution to your members and community. Email [Samantha.anthony@palwv.org](mailto:Samantha.anthony@palwv.org) with any questions.

### LWVPA Speakers Bureau:

The LWVPA Speaker's Bureau is now live! The LWVPA Speakers Bureau is an organizational resource to support local Leagues in providing presentations to other League member groups, and a source of League speakers to outside organizations on policies and positions of the League of Women Voters. These programs and presentations will be nonpartisan, fact-based and in alignment with the principles of the League. To request an LWVPA speaker, visit our [website here](#).

### Fundraising and Membership Event Opportunities:

LWVPA is planning to actively focus on membership recruitment at the State and local level this fall. Are you a League member interested in hosting a fundraising or membership event for LWVPA and your local League? Please contact [ed@palwv.org](mailto:ed@palwv.org)!

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## Government Policy Update

By Susan Gobreski, Director of Government Policy

**Election Policy:** The House and Senate both come back in September, and we expect to see new (and old) versions of the problematic legislation we saw in the spring. We are watching for new bill language and meetings - we expect this to be a key focus in the fall. Stay tuned!

**So-called audits (that aren't really audits):** In a very messy and public dust-up, Senate President pro tempore Corman moved the management of the Senate majority's efforts to make disproven claims about the 2020 election away from the controversial State Senator Mastriano to State Senator Chris Dush, who seems to be generally on the same page as Mastriano. Unfortunately, this does not represent a change in direction for the Senate, just a change in face.

**Redistricting:** Fair Districts PA (FDPA) is asking people to [Speak Up for Fair Maps](#) by submitting or giving testimony at public hearings. Testimony is important! It creates a legal record, calls attention to specific areas of concern, shows decision makers we are watching and builds pressure for fair maps.

- Local Leagues can organize members to [submit written testimony](#) and sign up to testify in person at upcoming Legislative Reapportionment Commission meetings or can just show up to any public hearing on redistricting - wear LWVPA or FDPA swag to make it clear our volunteers and members are paying attention.
- **We also need people to write Letters to the Editor to local papers!** Please see our new guide to writing letters to the editor [here](#).

**Open Primaries:** The Open Primaries coalition met over the summer and is gearing up to work together to see if there is a path to passage of SB 690 and HB 1369.

**Take Action:** Write a letter to the editor in September (And October.. November... etc.). [Here is a \\*new\\* short guide to writing a letter on \\*any\\* of our key priorities.](#)

**About Government Policy Committee meetings:** The Committee is a working committee; the expectation is that members participate on a regular basis and work on projects in between meetings to review key issues and determine action steps and develop plans to share with local Leagues. Nominations can be made [here](#) or by application to Susan Gobreski at [governmentpolicy@palwv.org](mailto:governmentpolicy@palwv.org)

**NEW! Monthly calls, the third Tuesday of each month at 7 pm,** to provide an overview of committee activities to local League Board members who want to follow the committee activity more closely for updates and Q&A, but are unable to consistently participate in the work and process of the committee. [Register here.](#)

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## Social Policy Update: Fair Funding in PA Public Schools

By Sarah Miller, Director of Social Policy

On October 12, the Education Law Center, the Public Interest Law Center, and O'Melveny & Myers LLP are [taking the State to court](#). The trial date, initially scheduled for a month prior, will give more time to update petitioner testimony as Pennsylvania public schools face greater discrepancies due to COVID-19. Petitioners represented include six school districts: William Penn, Greater Johnstown, School District of Lancaster, Panther Valley, Shenandoah Valley, and Wilkes-Barre Area and the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools, the NAACP-Pennsylvania State Conference, and four public school parents.

The updated information will further demonstrate the inequities present in the Philadelphia public school system and the undeniable fact that quality of education is closely-tied to levels of wealth among districts. Our legislators do not deny this, but they have failed to take action to uphold the constitutional right of quality public education.

Trial will be held in Courtroom 3002 of the Pennsylvania Judicial Center in Harrisburg. It is expected to be held five days a week and be live-streamed. Stay tuned as we announce a day for League members to show their support in person.

On Thursday, September 9th, Deborah Gordon Klehr, the Executive Director of the Education Law Center, is hosting a webinar open to all League members to learn more about the lawsuit and ways to get involved leading up to the trial. [Register here](#). Stay tuned for details regarding for League members to visit the state capital during a day of the trial.

On Monday, September 27th, the LWVPA Equity Initiative, in partnership with LWV Philly, will offer a special anti-racism program on equitable school funding. What should you know about the school funding lawsuit, and what action steps must be taken to ensure every PA K-12 student has resources to succeed, regardless of community demographic, wealth, or geography? [Register here](#).

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## Environmental Policy Update: Anti and Pro RGGI Bills

By Kathy Cook, Director of Environment

Senator Pittman (R) has re-introduced Senate Bill 950 from last session, which is now SB-119. There is an identical bill in the House, HB 637, introduced by Representative Struzzi (R). These bills are supposed to delineate the process for legislative approval before Pennsylvania imposes a carbon tax on employers engaged in electric generation. If either bill becomes a law, then the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#) (RGGI), would be stopped. Note that Pennsylvania was one of the states that originally developed the RGGI concept.

Senator Pittman argues that any carbon tax should be voted on by the General Assembly. On September 1, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) will review the RGGI proposal to make sure that it is in the best interests of Pennsylvanians. Then the bill will head to the legislature. Senator Pittman's bill looks to slow down or stop RGGI passage by questioning the legislative process.

Coal-fired electric generating units (EGU) are being phased out. The handwriting is on the "wall." Pennsylvania is turning to clean energy sources. Closures of coal-fired EGU's are inevitable.

This bill does not help the communities that will have severe job losses. By planning for the future and working to repurpose, retool and revise the job structure in these communities, Pennsylvania can survive plant closures and revive these communities while helping to clean up the environment.

The two bills, SB119 and HB637, ignore the successes this program has had in eleven other states. Furthermore, Senator Committa (D) and Representative Herrin (D), in their pro-RGGI bills SB15 and HB1565, have outlined a clear path to the future for communities that will incur job losses.

SB15 and HB1565 would establish several funds to disburse the estimated \$300 million or more in annual revenue generated through future RGGI auctions:

- 37.5% to the Energy Communities Trust Fund
- 12.5% to the Environmental Justice Communities Trust Fund
- 46% to the Clean Air Fund

The portion that goes to the Clean Air Fund is further broken down to 56% going to a Greenhouse Gas Abatement, Energy Efficiency, and Clean and Renewable Energy Investments Account, and the remaining 44% going to the Commercial and Industrial Energy Efficiency Account.

The Energy Communities Trust Fund will provide direct support to dislocated workers and communities experiencing impacts from the closure of existing power plants and the loss of jobs and investment. A trust fund board is made up of representatives from the executive branch, General Assembly, organized labor, and the state workforce development board.



## Environmental Policy Update, Continued

The Environmental Justice Trust Fund will make investments in Environmental Justice communities across the Commonwealth that are disproportionately at risk from climate impacts.

The trust fund board will similarly be composed of representatives from the executive branch and legislature, as well as nominees made by the Commonwealth's Environmental Justice Advisory Board.

Funding from the Greenhouse Gas Abatement, Energy Efficiency, Clean and Renewable Energy Investments Account will support investments in carbon capture utilization and storage, abandoned oil and gas well plugging, energy efficiency, transportation, climate-smart farming practices, forest stewardship, and clean and renewable energy investments, including biomass, geothermal, hydropower, energy storage, and solar and wind technologies, all of which will help drive in-state investment and job creation.

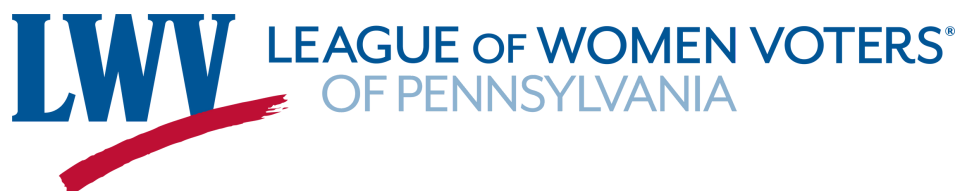
Finally, revenue will be dedicated to employers in Pennsylvania's industrial and commercial sector to help reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through investments in process electrification, fuel switching, combined heat and power, demand response and reduction, energy efficiency, and carbon capture utilization and storage.

By making these targeted investments, we can address the existential threat of climate change while also ensuring that all Pennsylvanians – from communities that form the backbone of our traditional energy economy to those currently bearing the brunt of health and safety risks associated with pollution and climate change – aren't left behind in the transition.

Senator Pittman and Representative Struzzi are majority chairs of the Environmental Resources and Energy Committees. Generally, the majority party is able to move bills that they favor through a committee while letting minority bills languish. SB 15 and HB 1565 are now in the Environmental Resources and Energy Committees (ERE). Since those bills were introduced by the minority party, we need public pressure on the EREs to get Pro-RGGI bills voted on. If your legislator is on one of the ERE committees, [please contact them](#) and ask that they do whatever they can to get SB 15 and HB 1565 voted on and through the committee.

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## Fair Districts Pennsylvania (FDPA) Update

By Carol Kuniholm, Fair Districts Chair

Good News!

On August 24, the Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC) voted 3 to 2 in favor of a resolution to reallocate prison data to count incarcerated people in their home communities. According to the resolution, introduced by House Minority Leader Joanna McCClinton, the LRC will count most individuals in state prisons as residents of their last known address.

Excluded from reallocation are those with no known home address or individuals serving life sentences will be counted in their places of incarceration. People in PA state prisons who did not live in Pennsylvania before incarceration will not be counted at all for redistricting purposes.

Representative McCClinton and Senate Minority Leader Jay Costa were expected yes votes. Both Republican leaders, House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff and Senate Majority Leader Kim Ward, voted no.

Chairman Mark Nordenberg was the positive tie-breaking vote. Before calling the vote, he described his own deliberative process and his conviction that the commission was designed to be independent of legislative influence. Much of what he said was an encouraging sign that this commission will be conducted more independently than commissions in the past, with far greater transparency and more visible public deliberation.

Both LWVPA and FDPA were active participants in a series of [regional forums on this issue](#) this past winter and spring. We submitted [joint letters](#) with other organizations, helped publicize a petition that we submitted to the LRC yesterday, and supporters gave testimony and [submitted dozens of online comments](#) on the LRC comment page. Thank you to all who played an active role in encouraging the LRC to pass this resolution.

This change is an important step toward more equitable representation. Take a moment to celebrate. And take heart: our voices together can make change possible.

Read more here:

- [WHYY: Pa. ends 'prison gerrymandering' with closely divided committee vote](#)
- [Pennsylvania Capital Star: Pa. redistricting commission to count people in prison at their old home, not in their cell](#)
- [Time: We Are Standing up for Equal Treatment Before the Law.' Pennsylvania Abolishes Prison Gerrymandering](#)

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## Shale & Sustainable Alternatives Project Update

By Heather Harr, Shale Project Director & Kathy Cook, Director of Environmental Policy

The "Shale & Sustainable Alternatives" project has had a busy summer. The Shale side of the project educates the public with an annual Shale & Public Health Conference and other programs on public health and environmental impacts of shale gas and petrochemical development. **Mark your calendars for this year's Shale & Public Health conference which will be held online on November 16 and 17 from noon to 4 p.m.** We'll be providing more information about the conference, including how to register to attend, in the October Communicator. The conference is free and open to the public.

The Sustainable Alternatives side of the project engages the public in "reimagining" their communities. Participants come up with ideas for economically and environmentally sustainable development in order to create a cleaner and more robust local economy with good jobs.

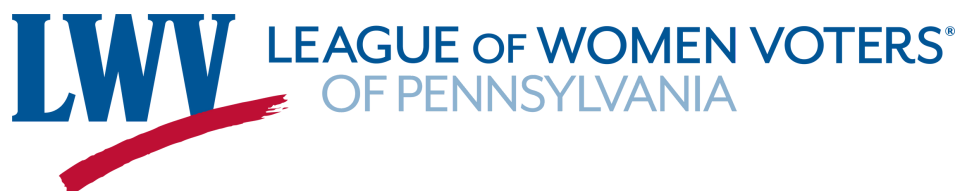
Over the summer, we launched Reimagine activities in three counties. We held two visioning sessions in Fayette County. Participants discussed what kinds of sustainable development they'd like to see. There was particular interest in brainstorming strategies to increase local farmers' income, such as having school lunches in this economically stressed county feature local farm products.

"Reimagine Cambria and Blair Counties: Visioning Sustainable Communities" was the first virtual visioning session we've held. The Zoom program featured short presentations by locals whose work is helping improve the public health, well-being and safety and making the counties more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. League member-at-large Etta Albright recruited a great set of presenters. Speakers included a director of a career and technology center, the vice president of a chapter of Trout Unlimited, the chair of the Altoona schools guidance counseling department, a retired teacher sharing his experiences with renewable energy, a farm processing plant manager, and more.

The Sustainable Alternatives part of the project also includes a website, [reimaginejobs.org](https://reimaginejobs.org). The website features information about nine different sectors of sustainable occupations, and entries from businesses, organizations and agencies about career opportunities. The sectors are:

- renewable energy
- sustainable construction
- regenerative agriculture
- green chemistry
- sustainable manufacturing
- recreation, tourism and hospitality
- sustainable transportation

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## Shale & Sustainable Alternatives Project Update, Cont.

- land reclamation and conservation
- union labor and workforce development

In addition to the website, we also hold a monthly program online. The program shines a spotlight on specific job sectors with presenters from that field. The June program was on Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation. July featured two CEOs of “green” chemistry companies. August focused on Grid Modernization and broadband expansion. Spotlight programs can be viewed at: [reimaginejobs.org/jobs-spotlight/](https://reimaginejobs.org/jobs-spotlight/)

### Notes from Wednesday July 28, Reimagine Jobs hosted a program on Green Chemistry:

Dr. Lalit Chordia, from Thar Process, discussed supercritical technology. This method uses carbon dioxide for a variety of chemical methods and produces no pollution. Dr. Chordia spoke about a variety of applications such as coffee decaffeination, hops extraction, water desalination, cannabis extraction, renewable energy creation and a variety of applications for the pharmaceutical industry.

The second panelist was Roger Berry from a start-up company located in Pittsburgh. This chemical company tests chemicals for toxicity and tries to create chemicals that will outperform harmful products. TAML@ catalyst is a chemical at the heart of their work. TAML@ catalyst supercharges other chemicals to oxidize and provide a better way to clean. Currently he is using this catalyst in mold removal.

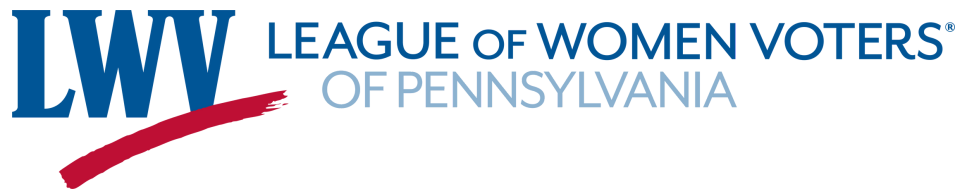
Mr. Berry mentioned that climate change was created in part by a social imbalance between industrialization and nature. More than 300,000 chemicals are used today. Roughly 80% have been produced since WWII. The proliferation of industrialization chemicals has led to serious problems such as declining fertility rates, an increase in disease states, and a reduction in IQ levels.

Mr. Berry mentioned that there are over 90,000 jobs in environmental clean-up, and they want to “REIMAGINE” a future where we don’t create toxic messes to clean up. Creating a safer, cleaner future. These two panelists represented the field of green chemistry, a fascinating, hopeful reality where we can solve the problems of today and replace them with technologies that provide jobs and a cleaner environment.

This approach also is the basis of the Reimagine Jobs initiative. We should reimagine a new and environmentally friendly future where our jobs are in sync with nature. The LWVPA Environmental Action Committee will be working alongside Heather Harr and her team on sustainable alternatives.

**For more information about the LWVPA Environmental Action Committee contact**  
[environmentalpolicy@palwv.org](mailto:environmentalpolicy@palwv.org)

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## Equity Initiative Update, Partnership Building: The Foundation for DEI

By Cathy Yungmann, Vice President and Anne Mosakowski, President, LWV-CDC



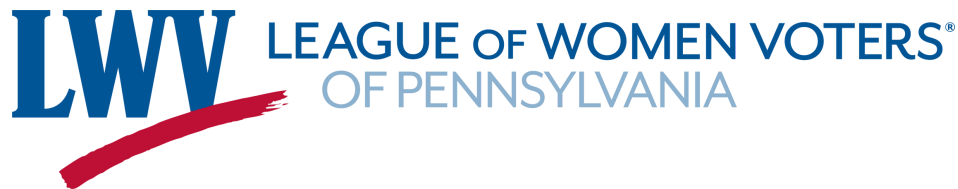
*LWV-CDC and NAACP Media Branch spearheaded an August 6, 2021 voting rights vigil.*

The **LWV of Central Delaware County** (LWV-CDC) began a conscious effort to expand its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) footprint through partnership building with other organizations. Past President Barbara Amstutz and current President Anne Mosakowski reached out to diverse local groups with an effective, powerful pitch: Our organizations have similar goals of education and empowerment. Can we partner on projects that will benefit us both?

A wonderful example of successful DEI integration is part of our multi-year civic education project revolving around criminal justice reform. Our LWV-CDC invited the NAACP Media branch to co-sponsor virtual public presentations about the topic. Representatives from both groups attended planning sessions and became members of each other's organizations. Each suggested expert community contacts as the event presentation panels were finalized. Both groups promoted the events to their extensive network of possible audiences. This has led to cooperation with our local NAACP on other public events such as a [voting rights vigil at the county courthouse](#) and participation in events involving environmental justice and quality of life issues.

The secret of our success was developing **authentic partnerships** - really valuing the contributions of our new partners and acknowledging their expertise. By using our shared organizational missions and goals as a touchstone, it was easier to be open to new viewpoints from our partners about social justice issues and the steps necessary for change. We found that when we listened to what others were saying, we learned a lot. The life experience and community connections of the NAACP Media Branch members added substantially to our understanding of issues. Listening and sharing were crucial. We became more willing to let others take the lead in our mutual projects and truly respected their contributions and their depth of knowledge. We also found a great side benefit in being more open was becoming much more flexible and able to quickly pivot as circumstances demand these days.

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## Equity Initiative Update, Continued

By Cathy Yungmann, Vice President and Anne Mosakowski, President, LWV-CDC

The organizational cross-pollination really helped our League to grow. Examining our annual Program through the DEI lens has broadened our membership base. We have worked to eliminate barriers to LWV-CDC participation and to be more inclusive. For example, cooperating with other organizations and our county government led to the establishment of our first Delaware County Health Department this year. We also have started a partnership with The Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living and are partnering to conduct a candidate forum for their City Council. Chester City is in the CDC League jurisdiction, but we have not worked together on political action in the past, until we began thinking about partnerships with a DEI lens.

We encourage our members to understand DEI practices and to engage in helping us create a more perfect democracy. Find out more about LWV-CDC DEI activities on our website [Issues page](#).

*The Equity Initiative is grateful to the LWV-CDC, a member of our LWVPA Equity Team, for sharing the inspiring story of their work building vital community partnerships. Thank you to Cathy Yungmann and to past and current presidents, Barbara Amstutz and Anne Mosakowski. To learn about the important work of the Equity Team, contact [equity@palwv.org](mailto:equity@palwv.org) -- Jennifer Hanf, Equity Director*



LWV-CDC officers promoting the passage of our National For The People Act.

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## Update from LWVPA Open Primaries Advocacy Team

By Diana G. Dakey, League of Women Voters of Lackawanna County

A few things have been happening related to open primaries in Pennsylvania and elsewhere in the United States. The state of Maine recently passed legislation for semi-open primaries, the result of a bipartisan effort supported by the Maine League of Women Voters and other groups.

In Pennsylvania, we have an opportunity to do the same. Bills for semi-open primaries are in the Senate (SB 690) and the House (HB 1369). To refresh, SB 300, the predecessor of the current SB 690, passed with wide bipartisan support in the 2019-2020 session.

The bills would allow an unaffiliated, also known and unenrolled or independent voters to participate, upon request, in the Republican or Democratic primary. Registered Republicans or Democrats would continue to vote on their party's ballot. The League has long held the position that we abandon the closed primary system in favor of a system to allow electors, regardless of registration status, to participate in the primary of the major party of their choice. Advocating for opening Pennsylvania's primaries is consistent with our nonpartisan approach that promotes voting across the electorate.

LWVPA's Government Policy Committee is working with the [Open Primaries PA Coalition](#). Within the coalition, strategies are being developed to approach key legislators.

If you would like myself, Rochelle Kaplan, or someone from the LWVPA Speakers Bureau to explain these bills and significance, please contact the [LWVPA Speakers Bureau](#).

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## Member Resource: How to Write a Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor allow individuals, or people representing a group, to add perspective or information about key topics, including policy issues and events. **When you speak on behalf of the League, you are providing a voice from a group that is often trusted as a steady, fair and sensible organization.** Lawmakers and other officials usually care deeply about how they are perceived and pay close attention to what is in the local paper.

**In addition, letters to the editor help us advance our organization.** Sharing that the organization is active and promoting our work can bring in new supporters; spreading our position can influence the debate that may occur; building our following allows us a bigger platform to engage more people when we hold local events. Knowing that we are active and planning to promote our views can cause local elected officials to become more engaged in meetings and events.

How: Write a short (150-250 word) "essay" stating a perspective or making a point about a key issue. A letter should include the following:

- **The main point** ("Gerrymandering hurts our community." "Voting should be more convenient and accessible." "Our local State Representative has introduced an important bill.")
- **Why it is of general/public interest.** ("Inequitable education funding affects all of us, not just the kids getting an inadequate education." "Sustainable energy development will result in cleaner air for everyone.")
- **Some kind of example, statistic or personal point.** ("x% of PA children go to an underfunded school." "In states with early voting, voter participation is about x% higher.")
- **What you want people to do.** (Follow the school funding lawsuit; contact their local legislators about supporting early voting options; vote in local elections; attend a forum....) Even if you are just asking people to think more about this ("it is easy to ignore these issues; we urge more people to pay attention to what is happening in Harrisburg"), it helps to make a specific suggestion.
- **Be respectful, even if you need to be firm or suggest that an action was wrong.** (We think Rep X has taken the wrong position and should commit to support the use of ballot drop boxes.)

To submit it, look at the local paper's website and look for "how to submit a letter to the editor." Send an email with your submission and include your affiliation (the League!) and contact information. Not all letters will be printed, but don't get discouraged - keep submitting. When one is published, send the link to [ed@palwv.org](mailto:ed@palwv.org) so we can add the letters to our social media and share the great work you are doing!

This is an **easy and important** way to support and promote our priorities and help publicize the good work of the League. Give it a go!

***Help us grow stronger for the work ahead: Donate!***



## Write a Letter to the Editor, Continued

For more: the “Community Toolbox” at the University of Kansas has a helpful [LTE resource page](#).

### Here are a few helpful tips for getting your letters accepted by the editor:

- Keep your letter under 300 words. Editors have limited space for printing letters, and some papers have stated policies regarding length (check the editorial page for this).
- **Make sure your most important points are stated in the first paragraph.** Editors may need to cut parts of your letter, and they usually do so from the bottom up.
- Refer to a recent event in your community or to a recent article – make a connection and make it relevant.
- Use local statistics and personal stories to better illustrate your point.
- Make sure you include your title as well as your name – it adds credibility, especially if it's relevant to the topic being discussed. If you are a program director, your title may lend credibility to the letter.
- Including your League title is also important to showing that you're not trying to hide your interest in the topic. If you're a program director and you don't mention that in your letter, there may be a letter the next day accusing you of dishonesty for not revealing it.
- Editors may want to contact you, so include your phone number and e-mail address.



## LWVPA in the News

**Ahead of House vote, progressives offer Appalachia infrastructure agenda**, Pennsylvania Capital Star. Alongside other groups in Pennsylvania, President Dr. Terrie Griffin recently signed on to a Letter of Support for the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Bill in the United States Capitol. This letter was addressed to the Pennsylvania Capitol Delegation and stressed the importance of federal infrastructure and climate infrastructure in the Appalachia region and across the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The letter stressed that this "legislation is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you [lawmakers] to restore hope and shared prosperity to your district and to our state." [Read the full letter here.](#)

**Advocacy groups reflect on voting rights on the anniversary of the 19th Amendment**: In this Pennsylvania Capital-Star article, Director of Government Policy Susan Gobreski calls the civil rights movement and the ratification of the 19th Amendment "moments where we woke up and decided it was time to look at voting rights collectively." Gobreski states that there is an "opportunity" now to make voting even more inclusive.

**Other Voices: Prison gerrymandering in Pennsylvania must be addressed**: LWVPA has been an active voice for fair redistricting here in Pennsylvania for over 30 years. As the Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC) began hearings in preparation for Census Bureau release of data, we joined other organizations in asking attention to an essential element in creating fair maps: counting incarcerated persons in their home communities.

## Follow LWVPA on Social Media!

Follow The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania on social media to stay up to date with League activities! And encourage your friends, family, and coworkers to do so as well.

We are working to increase our social following on all platforms so be sure to give our posts a like, favorite, retweet, or share whenever you can! The best way to amplify the League's work is through social media outreach. And if you have anything you think the State League should share, put it in the @comms\_social\_media channel on Slack.

**You can find our platforms here:**

Instagram - [@lwvpa](#)

Twitter - [@lwvpa](#)

Facebook- [The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania](#)

LinkedIn - [The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania](#)

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