



# Chester County VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Chester County, PA

610-644-5960

[www.lwvccpa.org](http://www.lwvccpa.org)

*September/October 2015*

Keep up to date with the League! Sign up for updates at: [www.lwvccpa.org](http://www.lwvccpa.org)

Connect with us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/LWVofChesterCounty](https://www.facebook.com/LWVofChesterCounty)

## **President's Message**

Susan Carty

[sc51446@aol.com](mailto:sc51446@aol.com)

### **It is Judicial Election Season..... And Judges Matter**

“Pennsylvania is the only state in the country to hold judicial elections solely in odd-numbered years. This year, 2015, three of the seven seats on the [state supreme court](#) are up for election. Additionally, there is one vacancy on both the [Pennsylvania Superior Court](#) and the [Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court](#), the state's two [intermediate appellate courts](#). There are also contested common pleas court races in [Philadelphia](#), [Allegheny](#), [Northampton](#), [Erie](#), [Northumberland](#), [Cumberland](#), [Westmoreland](#), [Greene](#), [Chester](#), [Somerset](#), [York](#), [Berks](#), [Delaware](#), [Montgomery](#), [Franklin](#), [Bradford](#), [Cambria](#), [Adams](#) and [Lawrence](#) counties.”

Judicial elections in Pennsylvania generally have very low media coverage. Citizen interest or participation in judicial elections also tends to be low. We hear voters complain that they have very little information available to them to help in making decisions between candidates. And at the same time, judicial candidates are prohibited from stating their views on issues that are likely to come before them in the court. It is difficult to know. Yet, it all matters.

Judges wield enormous power. They make decisions that affect our everyday lives. Depending on the circumstances, judges can halt strikes and work stoppages, force companies, public agencies and individuals to take certain actions, overrule elected officials and impose checks and balances to protect our freedoms. In fact, there is hardly an issue of importance to everyday life that doesn't land in front of a judge at one time or another.

Just like other candidates who run for office in contested elections, judicial candidates must raise money to finance their campaigns. Typically, contributors to such campaigns are the very parties, litigants and lawyers who ultimately appear before the courts on which the candidates are seeking to serve. Additionally, third party special interest groups have become increasingly active in judicial elections, funding advertising campaigns and making contributions to candidates. Rules of conduct do not require judges to recuse themselves in cases involving campaign contributors.

What's a voter to do? First, try a little homework on the internet. Research the judicial candidates, all of them, by name. Evaluate their experience, their record and other relevant information. Talk to your friends. Review both political party recommendations. And by all means, review the local LWVCC Voters Guide! Finally, get to the polls and VOTE – all the way down the ballot!

Our Judges matter... <http://www.palwv.org/2015-municipal-primary-election-voters-guide/>

### **NOVEMBER 3RD, 2015: ELECTION HELP IS NEEDED**

***Chester County Voter Services is in need of a Judge of Election in North Coventry, Schuylkill and New Garden. There is also a need for clerks in Phoenixville. Emergency training will be provided. Please contact the Chester County Voter Services at 610-344-6000 and request to speak with Director Forsythe, ext. 410 if you or some you know is able to help.***

## **Voters Service**

**Mary Lou Dondero  
610-692-3299**

August and September brought League outreach throughout Chester County, as we visited our local libraries, Freedom Village and the Exton Square Mall. Many thanks to everyone who made these voter registration events possible!

Avon Grove – Connie Eash, September 21 and 23  
Chester County District Center – Jean Goerth and Barbara DeWilde, September 22  
Chester Springs – Marg Perina, September 17  
Downingtown – Pat Miles, September 22  
Easttown – Geri Joseph, September 11  
Henrietta Hankin – Loraine Deisinger, August 18  
Honey Brook – Karen Gorgonzola, September 12  
Oxford – Steve Roberts, September 10 and 19  
Paoli – Joan Bergquist, September 19  
Phoenixville – P.J. Zalewski, September 29  
Tredyffrin – Margaret Dalesandro, September 14  
West Chester – Cathy Palmquist, September 15  
Freedom Village - Betty Leifer and Barbara DeWilde – September 9  
Exton Square Mall - Jean Goerth, Barbara Nicholson, Mary Lou Dondero – Sept. 12

## October and November Activities

October 20 - "Friends Helping Friends" Fundraiser – Boscov's Department Stores

October 24 10:00 a.m., Tredyffrin Township Building:

"Meet the Candidates" – Tredyffrin Township Supervisors and  
Tredyffrin-Easttown School Board candidates

October 24 10:30 a.m., Borough Hall, West Chester:

Judge, Court of Common Pleas – Allison Bell Royer and Julia Malloy Good

November 6 – Naturalization Ceremony, Justice Center – 11:30 a.m., Reception - Lobby – 12:30 p.m.

## Education

Toni Keg

[akeg@verizon.net](mailto:akeg@verizon.net)

### PA Auditor General Discusses Impact of Budget Impasse on Districts

PA Auditor General Eugene DePasquale reports that, through September, the budget impasse forced at least 17 school districts and two intermediate units to borrow more than \$346 million to meet expenses and keep classrooms open. Interest and fees on those borrowed education dollars could reach \$11.2 million.

From Auditor General DePasquale: "Even if the commonwealth repays the borrowing costs to the districts and IUs — and that is not guaranteed — the money has to come from somewhere, and that could eat into other parts of the education budget. This is already a huge problem affecting districts in rural, suburban, and urban areas. And it is going to turn into a crisis if the budget doesn't get passed now."

For more: <http://www.paauditor.gov/press-releases/auditor-general-depasquale-says-school-districts-ius-have-borrowed-more-than-346-million-because-of-state-budget-impasse>

### Latest PA System of School Assessment (PSSA) Results Released Reflect Changes in Standards

The PSSA is administered in grades 3 through 8 in English language arts and mathematics and this year's spring administration was the first time the test was aligned to the new, more rigorous Pennsylvania Core Standards. The PSSA science assessments administered in grades 4 and 8 were unchanged. The results on the new assessment show fewer students are scoring advanced or proficient, particularly in mathematics. The results are similar to what many other states experienced when transitioning to more rigorous standards.

From PA Secretary of Education Dr. Pedro Rivera: “It’s crucial that people understand comparing old scores to new scores isn’t a reliable indicator of student growth or academic achievement. This year’s results are truly the new benchmark.” Rivera noted that under the heightened standards some material is being tested a full grade level earlier than under the previous standards, with more emphasis on analysis and complex problem solving.

The impact of the new assessment on student scores prompted US Department of Education approval of Pennsylvania’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver, allowing for a one-year pause in the use of the state’s School Performance Profile (SPP). The SPP is a significant part of Pennsylvania’s obligations under the federal accountability system established by the ESEA and was first used in the 2012-13 academic year to provide students, families, school districts, and the general public with information to review the performance of Pennsylvania schools using a common measure.

Schools that administer Keystone Exams will continue to receive SPP scores, meaning the only schools that administered PSSAs in 2015 that will have SPP scores will be those that also administered Keystone Exams. In the absence of SPP scores this year for most schools with grades kindergarten through 8, PSSA achievement scores will not be part of the evaluations of teachers and principals in these schools. Evaluations will continue to include student growth scores. For more: <http://www.education.pa.gov/Pages/PSSA-Information.aspx#.VhpXMvIVhBc>

### **Performance Audit of PA Department of Education Released**

PA Auditor General Eugene DePasquale reports the audit shows PDE did not provide adequate assistance to 561 academically challenged schools with 310,000 students enrolled.

The report includes thirty recommendations for improvement to address four findings:

- PDE failed to provide additional assistance to poor-performing schools
- Board of Education failed to update the master plan for basic education since 1999
- PDE failed to monitor special advisors and assistants
- PDE relied on retired employees to fill critical positions and violated the state employees’ retirement code.

From DePasquale: “It is astonishing to me that so many schools — with more than 310,000 students — may not be receiving the extra support they need to help their students succeed academically. If PDE continues to overlook these institutions and the students they serve, more and more children will struggle scholastically further down the road. It is also disturbing that for 16 years, the State Board of Education — which is responsible for setting statewide education policy — failed to develop and implement a statutorily required basic education master plan to be issued every five years. The plan should be current, and it should be aligned with the ever-changing education landscape, including technological advances, requirements under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and the explosion of charter schools.”

To view the report: <http://www.paauditor.gov/press-releases/auditor-general-depasquale-says-561-academically-challenged-schools-overlooked-by-department-of-education>

## US Education Secretary Arne Duncan Stepping Down

Duncan plans to step down from his Cabinet position by the end of the year. Obama has chosen John B. King Jr., currently serving as Deputy Secretary of Education, to replace Duncan.

King is a former charter school leader in Boston and New York, and joined the US Education Department in January after serving as commissioner of education for the state of New York. In that role, he was a key architect of new teacher evaluations tied to test scores and played a key role in pushing New York to adopt new tests aligned to the Common Core State Standards years before other states did the same.

More at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2015/10/02/education-secretary-arne-duncan-reportedly-will-step-down-at-end-of-year/#letter>

## ***Upcoming Events of Interest:***

### **LWVUS Constitutional Amendment Consensus Meeting: October 17**

The LWV of Chester County is hosting a Consensus Meeting on Saturday, October 17, 9 AM at West Chester Borough Hall, 402 East Gay St. ***No reservations necessary!***

Join other LWVCC members for discussion and consensus about ways to address and support constitutional change. Downloadable study guide available at: <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/constitutional-amendment-study-guide>

### **October 21: Paper Tigers at West Chester University Sykes Hall, 6:30 PM -9 PM**

*Paper Tigers* is an intimate look into the lives of selected students at Lincoln High School, an alternative school that specializes in educating traumatized youth in Walla Walla, WA. The film examines the inspiring promise of Trauma Informed Communities - a movement that is showing great promise in healing youth struggling with the dark legacy of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). A panel discussion will follow the film screening.

## **Environmental & Conservation Issues**

Alma Forsyth  
610-388-1361

[jalkforsyth@verizon.net](mailto:jalkforsyth@verizon.net)

A reminder that League members and the general public need to take timely action to encourage local, county, state and federal officials to protect citizens' rights to clean water and clean air. Unfortunately, [Senate Bill 875](#), the Acid Mine Drainage as Fracking Fluid Act was signed into PA Law on October 8, 2015.

This August, the EPA proposed the first ever rules to cut methane pollution. As Clean Water Action, reports: “It’s a good first step, but the rules don’t go nearly far enough if we’re serious about mitigating climate change and protecting public health. Tell the federal government and Pennsylvania that we’re fed up with unchecked pollution from the gas industry and we expect the toughest rules possible.”

Keep track of the new Chester County [Landscapes Land Plan](#). Voice your opinion about the future development plan – potentially more economic development, which may affect Open Space, Agriculture and Historic Resources.

## **Agriculture**

**Sarah Caspar and Mary Ciarrocchi, Co-Chairs**

610 873 1237

[scaspar@comcast.net](mailto:scaspar@comcast.net)

### **Chester County League of Women Voters Agriculture Committee, Sept 6, 2015, 1PM-3PM**

Meeting Place: Birmingham Meeting

Present: Mary Ciarrocchi, Sarah Caspar, Mina Johnson, Ginny Newlin, Alma Forsyth, Connie Eash

#### **The Agenda:**

- Sustainable Agriculture along the RTE 1 corridor
- Chester County Dept. of Health and Environment (issues with farmers)
- GMOs
- FDA grass fed beef subsidy
- Contact Lancaster County League
- Develop a Facebook site for the Ag. committee

#### ***Future Programs:***

- Annmarie Cantrell: GMOs
- Speakers from the Chester County Master Gardeners program: specifically on sustainable farming

#### ***Our mission and our theme: Save Agriculture in Chester County***

- Look at laws and regulations for both small and large farms Chester County
- Information re: CRP SAFE (FSAusda.gov/crp is 30: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/index>)
- Talk to Andy Dinniman, who has long been involved in Chester County Agriculture

#### ***Previous meeting:***

- Chester County Food Bank: Needed items: Whole grains (pasta, rice cereal), peanut butter, canned tuna and chicken, canned vegetables and fruit.

#### ***Follow up with Chester County Health and Environment:***

• I met with Richard Johnson, Director of CCHD: it oversees testing of wells, soil erosion and testing of milk and other items for bacteria. CCHD has neither regulatory nor statutory authority; it has no authority to demand GMO labelling or anything else that might assist farmers. Our goal would be to find out who has that authority for the Commonwealth as well as information on the provisions of the PADA’s support for the small farmer.

***Next Meeting: East Nantmeal EAC, Oct. 15 at 7 PM at the Township Building: Biogas***

**It's membership time and the Chester County League of Women Voters needs YOUR support. Please renew your membership (details below) TODAY!**

**Talk to friends and neighbors about the League. Invite them to League events and share our publications, website and Facebook page. Through sharing our mission and work, every member can encourage at least 1 new member to join. Please give it a try!**

## **Membership**

**Patricia Schultz**

[pls@patriciaschultz.com](mailto:pls@patriciaschultz.com)

610-436-9752

If your goals are the same as our goals, membership will help you achieve them. Even if you haven't the time for active participation, your membership will help strengthen our voice. And if you cannot join us now, consider supporting the League with a donation. Or, for someone special, a GIFT MEMBERSHIP in the League is a great idea, especially around the holidays.

**Who Can Join?** Membership is open to everyone. Men, women, students, non-citizens - anyone who shares our philosophy and goals can join.

**Questions?** Contact Patricia Schultz 610-436-9752 or [pls@patriciaschultz.com](mailto:pls@patriciaschultz.com)

**Annual membership is \$75.** You can join by filling out the below form and return by mail to LWVCC at 1442 Pottstown Pike, #238, West Chester 19380 or join and pay online at [www.lwvccpa.org](http://www.lwvccpa.org)

**Donations Welcome!** Any amount is greatly appreciated and will help us continue our mission. If you are able, please consider 'rounding up' your membership - just check the Donation box on the form for the extra amount. Thank you!

## WHAT IS THE LEAGUE?

- A non-partisan political organization that does not support or oppose political parties or candidates.
- An activist organization that works to influence public policy on a variety of issues.
- An educational organization that encourages informed and active participation in government.

## WHAT DOES THE LEAGUE DO?

### Educates

- Researches critical and sometimes controversial matters of concern to our members.
- Provides information to members and the public about a variety of local, state and national issues.

### Takes Action

- Reports results of studies to members, policy makers and the public.
- Lobbies government officials on League positions established by study, discussion and consensus of members.

### Gets Out the VOTE !

- Encourages participation of citizens in the electoral process through voter registration, Voters Guides, candidate forums and the Internet.

## HOW CAN YOU JOIN THE LEAGUE?

- Complete and mail this membership form along with the appropriate dues. A gift membership is a great idea for someone special.
- Or for more information:
  - Go to our website: [www.lwvccpa.org](http://www.lwvccpa.org)
  - Ask a League member for help.
  - Or call 610-644-5960.



## WHO ARE LEAGUE MEMBERS?

- Men and women of all ages.
- Students and retirees.
- Homemakers and business owners.
- Legislators and community organizers.
- Teachers, doctors, lawyers and more.
- Membership open to all. Please join us.

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

### Personal Growth

- Meet people who want to support constructive change.
- Sharpen your skills or develop new ones in areas of management, communications and public speaking. Learn how to lead a meeting, moderate a debate or run for public office.
- Network as you enter a world of personal, professional and political opportunities.
- Develop personal friendships.
- Make a difference in your community.

### Community Involvement

- Be informed about what is happening in government and politics at home, in Harrisburg and Washington.
- Get involved in the League's public service efforts, candidate forums, workshops, conferences and voter registration.
- Influence decision-making.
- Have an impact on governmental decisions that directly affect you, your family and your community.
- Work with other community groups.

- \_\_\_ Individual or Gift Membership \$75.00
- \_\_\_ Second member in same household: \$37.50
- \_\_\_ Student Membership \$20.00

- \_\_\_ Send VOTER by Email (members) or
- \_\_\_ Send VOTER by U.S. Mail (members)
- \_\_\_ Please send me information about the League of Women Voters Chester Co.

\_\_\_ I cannot join now, but am enclosing a contribution to support League activities in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_ Send information about advertising and sponsorship opportunities.

-----  
Name (s)  
-----

-----  
Address  
-----

-----  
City Township  
-----

-----  
State Zip Code  
-----

-----  
Email Address  
-----

-----  
Telephone (s)  
-----

Checks payable to LWVCC and mail to:

LWVCC  
1442 Pottstown Pike, #23B  
West Chester, PA 19380

Because we lobby at the local, state and national levels, membership dues and other contributions to the LWVCC are not tax-deductible. Contributions to the League of Women Voters CC Education Fund are tax-deductible.  
[www.lwvccpa.org](http://www.lwvccpa.org)

**League Board Meetings occur on the third Saturday of the month.** ALL members are welcome and encouraged to bring a friend. Board meetings are a great forum to introduce prospective members to the positive work of the League.

**Location: West Chester Borough Hall, 401 East Gay Street, West Chester**

**Time: 10 AM – noon**

**League of Women Voters of PA: [www.palwv.org](http://www.palwv.org) 717-234-1576**

**League of Women Voters United States: [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) 202-429-1965**



Newsletter of the League of Women Voters PA-CEF Water Resources Education Network

*A monthly Update from the Water Resources Education Network  
a project of the League of Women Voters of PA - Citizen Education Fund*

<http://wren.palwv.org/wren/index.html>

The VOTER is published every *other* month during the year and relies heavily on committee chairs and members for reports, summaries, announcements and comments submitted to the VOTER – thanks to all for their contributions.

**DISCLAIMER – The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates running for office or political parties. Any use of the League of Women Voters' name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.**

**Horrocks**  
**194 Phillips Mill Rd.**  
**Cochranville, Pa. 19330**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

