



April 2021

MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters of Chester County is a nonpartisan organization whose purpose is to serve the local community by promoting informed active citizen participation in government and by acting on selected governmental issues

Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 17: Board Meeting 10 AM- Noon (Zoom)
Thursday, April 22: Open House 12:00-1:00 PM (Zoom) Earth Day
Thursday, April 29 People Powered Day of Action (FairDistrictsPA)
Monday, May 3: Last Day for In-Person Registration
Tuesday, May 11: Last Day for Mail-In Registration
Tuesday, May 18: PRIMARY ELECTION DAY

From the President

TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT

APRIL 2021

Imagine, just a few years ago, there was a gathering of State League Presidents called by the National Organization to travel to the historic Rockefeller Mansion and Pocantico Conference Center along the Hudson River. What a choice of sites! How fast could I get there?

Why were we meeting?

The Presidents were invited to join in on serious discussions about the future of our Voting Rights. The concerns reflected nationwide efforts to contain, to control, and to radically change voters' access to the ballot. What would those efforts look like? What would the League do in response? Conversations carried on into the night. Fascinating conversations filled with "what if?" and "how to?" and most importantly "what was missing?" Imagine.....

Now today, across the country, many League of Women Voters local leagues are actively working on the development and implementation of the National League Campaign focused on DEI: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION. These local leagues are partaking in thoughtful conversations as well as encouraging individual self-reflection in conjunction with organizational reflection. Recognizing who we really are; how we have historically been perceived; and what we now must do to meet the challenge of a rapidly changing world. What a task!

Those efforts will be challenged. But there is no doubt of the critical necessity for actions and reactions to the many threats as they rain down on our country. Nationwide, our voting future is under attack! Now, Local Leagues are actively assessing the DEI components of their own communities with the goal of becoming even STRONGER and MORE IMPACTFUL in support and protection of our RIGHT TO VOTE. What a huge, challenging undertaking to embrace! What a necessary undertaking to embrace! Our Right to Vote is Calling for Protection!

The outcomes of this self-reflection work are unknown. Yet, the process of this hard work is meant to lead us all toward a stronger organization, a more knowledgeable organization and most importantly, a more relevant organization. An organization that reflects its community. An organization that not only educates and registers voters, but one that also stands up to protect that right to vote for ALL. Let us all join in on this reflection together. Let us prepare for action. Our work is not done. Our challenges have truly just begun!

Let us Make Things Right and Do What Is Right.

In League,
Susan Carty , Co-President, LWVCC

OPEN HOUSE on March 25, 2021

Meryle Rothman

Thank you to our members who attended the last OPEN HOUSE. And a special thank you to Elaine Friedlander for facilitating the event.

The League is here to educate and empower our voters, but as members, we have to educate ourselves before we can pass on the information to our voters. I hope that the new members who attended discovered that there is so much information available. We just have to be curious and spend time accessing these resources. Our community relies on the League to help them make informed choices at the polls.

This discussion today included a review of :

- Our Mission Statement
- Volunteer Suggestions from Cathy Palmquist (E-blast from March 17)
- Our chapter's website www.lwvccpa.org (Thank you again Deb Gallek, our webmaster)
- Our Chester County Voter Services website - www.chesco.org/election
- www.fairdistrictsPA.com (Thank you John Barnett and Carol Kuniholm)
- www.pasenelectioncommittee.com - Election Integrity & Reform

Again, we hope that you will take the time to access all or some of these resources. We need to be prepared to help our voters.

See you next month - 4th Thursday at Noon - April 22 - Earth Day

From the Board Room

On Saturday, March 20, 2021, members met for our monthly board meeting --- on Zoom of course. Co-President Pam Gray reported on donating five boxes of Chester County League records to the Chester County Historical Society. The records included scrapbooks as well as local league documents, dating from the 1950s to 2004. Ellen Endslo at CCHS was glad to acquire them. Treasurer Carole Mackrell has three boxes of financial records that could be donated to CCHS as well. And now both Pam and Carole will have more room in their respective basements.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT - March 25, 2021

Meryle Rothman

As of today, we have 168 active members. Thank you all for your support and commitment to the League. Thank you Mary Lou Dondero for helping to mail our dues reminder notes and making phone calls. You can always email Meryle Rothman to check on your dues and to offer to help on the Membership Committee.

It is important that we are open to crossing committee lines to help wherever we are needed. I've been sending voting announcements to Deb Gallek and Gretchen Cole for our website and FB page and ordering and picking up voting material. In this challenging time when we are not able to work directly, in person, with each other or our voters, we have to be creative and flexible, to think of what our voters need and to just do what has to be done. .

Be sure to follow what is going on in the PA Assembly with attempts at voter suppression and scaling back of mail-in voting. We hope that you will stay informed, keep in touch with other members, sign up for some of the fantastic webinars that are offered, join a committee and reserve some time to help and get ready for the next big thing - **the May 18th Primary**.

Voter Services Report

Mary Lou Dondero

With fewer Covid cases* and an increase in Covid vaccinations, election activity may return to “normal” this spring and summer. *However, remember to attend these events masked and socially distanced.* Mary Lou informs us that the Turk’s Head Festival (July 18) and the Mushroom Festival (September 11) are scheduled already. In addition, the Blues Festival at Reeds Park in Phoenixville, the Apple Festival in Oxford, and the community event at the Wilson Farm near Chesterbrook will require voter registration tables. Call Mary Lou Dondero (610-692-3299) or Loraine Deisinger (610-321-0262) if you are interested in volunteering an hour or two. (* Covid cases are beginning to increase again. The infection rate was a little over 5% a month ago and is now up to almost 7% as of 3/31/2021. Certainly the rate is better than 16% around the holidays, but the rate is creeping upward as the new very contagious variant makes its appearance and citizens are less vigilant about masks and not socializing.)

The Legislative Directories are just about ready to be distributed. These are handy reference tools for contacting one of our legislators to express your opinion. We have 4000 printed, but if needed, they may still be copied. (We have plenty on hand, but if you must make copies, this document is on 8.5 X 14 paper.) The directories will be included in election Drop-off materials. The directories will also be on the LWVCC website thanks to Deb Gallek, our webmaster. If you would like to help assemble Drop-off Packets (Gallon Ziploc bags containing the directories, voter info cards, bookmarks, applications for registering to vote and applications to vote by mail.), call Pam Gray (610-431-6850) or Loraine Deisinger (610-321-0262). Val Thomas suggested we make labels for the Ziploc bags to identify from where the Drop-off bags are coming.

Mission Statement

You may have noticed this issue of *The Voter* began with the Mission Statement for our local branch of the LWV. This will be a regular feature of the Newsletter. Each meeting will also begin with our Mission Statement. Members need to keep our purpose in mind at all times. Meryle Rothman suggests that we amend the mission statement to include the “empowerment of voters” and “the defending of democracy and the right to vote.” Board members seemed to agree but needed to consult the bylaws of our local league for how to make this amendment.

Nominating Committee: *Judy Menzel, Cathy Palmquist, Kay Sharp, Janice Shreffler and Brett Dolente*

The Nominating Committee will present its slate of officers and directors at the May Board Meeting (May 17) as per the Bylaws (p. 20 in the LWVCC Handbook). Judy Menzel recommended inclusion of the Chapter Bylaws in the newsletter. The committee also recommended revising of the Bylaws to include responsibilities of the officers and directors, term limits, provision for co-positions, a defined leadership ladder. They suggest members fill out a form surveying their skills, interests, and experiences. These forms are helpful to the nominating committee in filling the slate of officers and directors. Officers could use the surveys to find committee chairs and filling in other volunteer positions. Cathy Palmquist designed a possible survey.

Many of our members have received surveys from the PA Senate concerning Act 77: mail-in ballots, drop boxes and auxiliary voter services centers in the 2020 election. We encourage LWVCC members to respond. Moreover, please contact your state rep and state senator in support of retaining Act 77.

D --- DIVERSITY

E --- EQUITY

I --- INCLUSION

D.E.I. is the acronym that League members often forget the meaning of. What it means in functional terms is that our membership should “look” like a cross-section of the country. When advocating for issues, we should be measuring our stands by a “DEI” yardstick. Will a policy benefit everyone or exclude certain groups? Will a policy provide equity in wages, opportunity, and funding across the state/country? Will our voting laws remain inclusive?

So that our members can be on the same page, it is important to have some uncomfortable conversations among ourselves and with the public. As our DEI Committee is forming, we need to explore the impact that our various identities, including race, have on us, as individuals and as a League. This may result in uncomfortable conversations. However, discomfort itself is not the goal. Growth through the discomfort is the goal – for us as individuals and as a League.

Toward this end, Sandy Schaal suggests that we read an article included in DEI material provided by the Pennsylvania League called “The Back Pack of White Privilege” by Peggy McIntosh. Google Peggy McIntosh and you will find it to read or print. Another suggested resource is by a former president of the national LWV, Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins: [The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters](#). Jefferson-Jenkins will be one of the featured speakers at the state convention in June. Several of us on the Board own copies and can lend it out if you are interested. Call Pam Gray at 610-431-6850.

Our Chester County LWV DEI committee is currently forming. If you are interested in becoming part of the committee, please contact Susan Carty or Sandy Schaal.

VOTE411.ORG AND THE VOTERS’ GUIDE

Lisa Forsyth is organizing our Voters’ Guide that will be published before the May 18th Primary. It will contain bios of candidates and answers to questions posed by the state sponsored organization. The Board has agreed to purchase a \$400 subscription for the Vote 411 service. Lisa will hold a committee meeting ASAP. Ellen Richardson, along with other members, has volunteered to serve on Lisa’s committee.

Measures Up for Referendum on the May 18th Primary Ballot

(ALL REGISTERED VOTERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR BALLOT QUESTIONS IN PA PRIMARY ELECTIONS)

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we have what are called closed primaries. Only voters registered as Democrats or as Republicans can vote in the primary. Independents are out of luck when choosing candidates to run in November. BUT INDEPENDENTS MAY VOTE in the May 18th primary! Often measures appear on the primary ballot, **and independents CAN vote for or against these measures**. Here are the measures presented on the primary ballot. Note that there are now **FOUR referendum** issues on the May 18th ballot.

BALLOT QUESTION #1

Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to change existing law and increase the power of the General Assembly to unilaterally terminate or extend a disaster emergency declaration—and the powers of Commonwealth agencies to address the disaster regardless of its severity pursuant to that declaration—through passing a concurrent resolution by simple majority, thereby removing the existing check and balance of presenting a resolution to the Governor for approval or disapproval?

Plain English Statement of the Office of Attorney General

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2021-1 RELATING TO THE TERMINATION OR EXTENSION OF DISASTER EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2021-1 proposes to amend Article III, Section 9 of the Pennsylvania Constitution to provide a new exception to traditional legislative procedure by allowing the General Assembly to terminate or extend a disaster emergency declaration or a portion of such declaration without needing the Governor's approval.

Currently, Article III, Section 9 establishes a general rule that all orders, resolutions or votes requiring approval by both the House of Representatives and Senate must be presented to the Governor for his approval or veto. Resolutions for the adjournment of the General Assembly are exempted from this process. If the order, resolution or vote is approved by the Governor, it becomes law. If the Governor vetoes the resolution, it does not become law unless two-thirds of the House and Senate vote to override the veto. The proposed amendment would create an additional exception to this customary legislative procedure for concurrent resolutions to terminate or extend, in whole or in part, a disaster emergency declaration issued by the Governor.

The proposed amendment will also have the effect of reversing a recent ruling of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court which held the Pennsylvania Constitution prohibited the General Assembly from passing a concurrent resolution to terminate the Governor's Covid-19 disaster emergency declaration without presenting it to the Governor for his approval. It will change the law to allow the General Assembly to terminate or extend a disaster emergency declaration through a concurrent resolution approved by only a majority of the members of the House and Senate, without having to present the resolution to the Governor for his approval or veto.

The proposed amendment is limited in that it only changes the traditional legislative process for terminating or extending disaster emergency declarations issued by the Governor. The amendment will not alter the current legislative procedure with respect to which orders, resolutions or votes of the General Assembly must be presented to the **Governor** for his approval on any other subject matter.

BALLOT QUESTION #2

Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to change existing law so that: a disaster emergency declaration will expire automatically after 21 days, regardless of the severity of the emergency, unless the General Assembly takes action to extend the disaster emergency; the Governor may not declare a new disaster emergency to respond to the dangers facing the Commonwealth unless the General Assembly passes a concurrent resolution; the General Assembly enacts new laws for disaster management?

Plain English Statement of the Office of Attorney General

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2021-1 DISASTER EMERGENCY DECLARATION AND MANAGEMENT

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2021-1 proposes adding a new section to Article IV of the Pennsylvania Constitution. This amendment incorporates disaster emergency declaration and management powers directly into the Constitution by:

- Granting the Governor authority to declare a disaster emergency declaration by proclamation or executive order;
- Requiring each declaration to indicate the nature, location and type of disaster;
- Granting the General Assembly authority to pass laws providing for the manner in which each disaster shall be managed;
- Limiting the duration of a Governor's declaration to 21 days, unless otherwise extended, in whole or in part, by a concurrent resolution of the General Assembly;
- Preventing the Governor, upon the expiration of a declaration, from issuing a new declaration based upon the same or substantially similar facts, unless the General Assembly passes a concurrent resolution expressly approving a new declaration.

Currently, disaster emergency declaration and management powers are delegated by statute to the Governor. The Governor has the sole authority to issue and manage all disaster emergency declarations, which cannot extend beyond 90 days unless renewed by the Governor. The General Assembly may override a Governor's disaster emergency declaration by concurrent resolution that must be presented to the Governor for his approval or veto.

If approved, the amendment would transfer certain of the Governor's existing authority to respond to and manage disaster emergencies to the General Assembly. The Governor would retain the authority to issue an initial disaster emergency declaration but the declaration's permissible length would be reduced from 90 to 21 days. The sole authority to extend a declaration would lie with the General Assembly; presently, this power rests with the Governor. Upon expiration of the initial declaration, the amendment prohibits the Governor from issuing a new declaration based upon the same or substantially similar facts without the approval of the General Assembly. The Governor would no longer have unilateral authority to manage disasters, but would have to do so consistent with the laws passed by the General Assembly.

If approved, the General Assembly would be required to pass new laws establishing the manner in which each type of disaster shall be managed. If added to the Pennsylvania Constitution, the proposed amendment cannot be modified or repealed except by a judicial decision finding all or part of the proposed amendment unconstitutional or by the approval of a subsequent constitutional amendment.

BALLOT QUESTION #3

Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended by adding a new section providing that equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of an individual's race or ethnicity?

Plain English Statement of the Office of Attorney General

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT 3 or JOINT RESOLUTION NO.2021-1: PROHIBITION AGAINST DENIAL OR ABRIDGEMENT OF EQUALITY OF RIGHTS BECAUSE OF RACE OR ETHNICITY.

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2021-1, if approved by the electorate, will add a new section to Article I of the Pennsylvania Constitution. This amendment creates a constitutional prohibition against restricting or denying an individual's equal rights under Pennsylvania law because of race or ethnicity. Generally, inclusion of this amendment within the Pennsylvania Constitution signifies that freedom from discrimination based on race or ethnicity is an essential principle of liberty and free government. This amendment applies to all Pennsylvania state, county and local governmental entities, and guarantees

equality of rights under the law. The amendment, if enacted, will become a part of the Pennsylvania Constitution. As such, its provisions must be applied consistent with the other provisions of the Constitution.

This equal right to be free from racial or ethnic discrimination will exist independent from any such rights under the United States Constitution or corresponding federal law. If the current federal protections proscribing racial or ethnic discrimination are abolished, the prohibition against such discrimination will remain in the Pennsylvania Constitution. The amendment is limited in that it creates a right only under Pennsylvania law.

Once added to the Pennsylvania Constitution, the right to be free from racial or ethnic discrimination under the law cannot be eliminated except by a judicial decision finding the amendment unconstitutional or the approval of a subsequent constitutional amendment. If approved, the General Assembly may pass new laws to implement the amendment, but it may not pass a law inconsistent with it.

BALLOT QUESTION #4

Do you favor expanding the use of the indebtedness authorized under the referendum for loans to volunteer fire companies, volunteer ambulance services and volunteer rescue squads under 35 PA.C.S. Section 7378.1 (related to referendum for additional indebtedness) to include loans to municipal fire departments or companies that provide services through paid personnel and emergency medical services companies for the purpose of establishing and modernizing facilities to house apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, and for purchasing apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, protective and communications equipment and any other accessory equipment necessary for the proper performance of the duties of the fire companies and emergency medical services companies?

Plain English Statement of the Office of the Attorney General

ACT 2020-91: STATEWIDE REFERENDUM MAKING MUNICIPAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES COMPANIES ELIGIBLE FOR LOANS

The purpose of the ballot question is to determine whether Pennsylvania voters authorize making municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies eligible to apply for loans from an already existing state loan program. Pennsylvania voters approved the incurring of indebtedness of up to \$100,000,000 in four previous statewide referenda: \$10,000,000 on November 4, 1975; \$15,000,000 on November 3, 1981; \$25,000,000 on November 6, 1990; and \$50,000,000 on November 5, 2002. Originally, this indebtedness funded a loan program for volunteer fire companies, volunteer ambulance services and volunteer rescue squads.

Currently, municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies are not authorized to apply for loans from this program. The Pennsylvania General Assembly has determined that municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies are most in need of loans to replace outmoded or unsafe equipment and buildings to meet the increased demands for a higher level of service in the communities they serve.

If approved, the referendum will allow municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies to apply for loans from the program, consistent with the existing law and regulations. The Office of the State Fire Commissioner administers the loan program, and has promulgated regulations to govern the loan application process.

Upon successful application, the Office authorizes loans for the purposes and in amounts specified by the Emergency Management Service Code and the Office's regulations. These loans may be used for establishing or modernizing facilities to house firefighting apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles. They may also be used for the purchase of new firefighting apparatus equipment, ambulances and rescue vehicles, protective and communications equipment and any other accessory equipment necessary for the proper performance of these organizations' duties.

This referendum does not authorize incurring any additional debt to fund the loan program; it only expands the class of eligible loan applicants. It also does not expand the purposes for which loans may be made; municipal fire departments or companies with paid personnel and emergency medical services companies may only apply for the type of loans already provided for by law and regulation.

AND THERE YOU HAVE IT FOLKS --- 4 QUESTIONS AS LISTED ON THE BALLOT MAY 18, 2021. Many legislators hope that voters will not really read the questions nor think what the questions imply. Voters might say to themselves, "Whatever..." and then vote: yes, yes, yes, yes. As members of the League of Women Voters, we must educate citizens about the implications of each ballot question.

If you are an Independent, please make time to vote May 18 on measures important to all Pennsylvanians. And if you have friends registered as Independents, encourage them to vote on May 18. Help them to apply for a Mail-in Ballot which makes voting quick and easy.

A BIG THANK YOU TO GRETCHEN COLE for bringing this to my attention. This information will also be on our Facebook page and the LWVCC website.

PEOPLE POWERED DAY OF ACTION – Thursday April 29- SAVE THE DATE
<https://www.lwv.org/redistricting/people-powered-day-action>

The National LWV is planning events on this day to focus on and increase awareness around the redistricting process. And local Leagues across the country are making plans also. Stay tuned for more information and details about local venues and events. FairDistrictsPA and our Chester County chapter will keep you posted.

Note from the Editor of The Voter: WE NEED YOU---and YOU and YOU and YOU.....

This issue of The Voter will be my last issue as editor. I am moving to New Hampshire in June or July. **Regular communication** among our members is essential to keeping members informed and involved.

We need to form a **Newsletter Committee**. If we have one person to collect reports from committee chairs, a couple other members to attend and take notes on Open Houses, Speakers' events, and other meetings, and a person to organize the articles and type the newsletter, the monthly newsletter would be easy to produce. It would just take a little coordination and collaboration. Or as my mother would say: "Many hands make light work."

Please consider volunteering for the Newsletter Committee. Call or email me if interested:

Barbara Lathroum – Co-President, LWVCC

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