



July, 2023

lwvccpa.org

A Message from the President

Thank you to all who attended our June 22nd Annual Dinner featuring Celeste Trusty, PA State Director of Families Against Mandatory Minimums. Also, a huge thank you to Kay Sharp, our Criminal Justice Committee Leader for suggesting the excellent speaker.

Attendees were provided with compelling information about the state of Pennsylvania's prison system with respect to other states and to other countries. We have much to think about and to consider. Our state ranking on many issues is highly unflattering.

As a result of that educational experience, I want to share a quote with you that I have used once before and felt the need to share with you once again. Many discussions can be had with reference to this quote!

“Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters.”- Abraham Lincoln

Now, looking into the next few months, our Board will continue with monthly meetings during the summer. One of our primary goals will be to determine as well as define the restructuring of our League committee system. Changes are needed to expand our ability to effectively serve the community as well as engage our broader membership.

You are more than welcome to attend any meeting and to share your ideas as well. We always learn from each other's experiences! With the critically important November election coming soon, it is our obligation to League members as well as our community to offer helpful and informative educational opportunities. Also, don't hesitate to contact me directly or any of our board members.

In the meantime, stay well and safe!

In League,

Susan Carty, President LWVCC

Notices

Upcoming Dates:

LWVCC Board Meeting, Saturday July 15, 10:00AM East Goshen Twp. Building, 1580 Paoli Pike, West Chester, PA 19380. For the near future we will have in-person meetings only.

It's that time again!

2023 DUES REMINDER

League of Women Voters of Chester County

WE ARE ACCEPTING DUES AND DONATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023/2024

We hope you will renew your LWVCC membership. You are welcome to email me to double check on your dues status, mgrothman@verizon.net. Thank you if you are up to date.

CONTINUE TO STAY SAFE AND HEALTHY

(so we can see you in person again at League events and meetings.)

Our new League year (2023-2024) began on July 1, 2023. You are welcome to pay your dues using PayPal or mail a check, made out to LWVCC, to PO Box 62, Exton, PA 19341. As always, your support is greatly appreciated. Thank you. We could not do what we do without members like you.

Annual Membership Dues: \$75.00. For additional household member \$37.50 each.

Student Membership FREE

If you prefer, use PayPal for dues and donation at lwccpa.org/join-us/

Meryle Rothman, membership chair

Criminal Justice Report

If you did not attend the annual meeting, you missed a very thought-provoking speaker! Celeste Trusty the Pennsylvania State Director for FAMM (Families Against Mandatory Minimums) has long been dedicated to helping transform Pennsylvania's criminal justice system. Her focus has been on coalition building to advance sentencing and prison reform and raising greater awareness about how families, communities and taxpayers are impacted by Pennsylvania's legal system.

One of her concerns is that prisoners are not given the opportunity to vote even if they are eligible. According to the Pennsylvania Voter Registration Application if you meet all other requirements, you may register and vote if:

You are in prison awaiting trial but have not been convicted.

You are in prison after being convicted of a misdemeanor only.

You have been released from prison or a halfway house after completing your term of incarceration.

You are on probation or released on parole.

You are under house arrest. For more information you can go to www.vote.PA.gov.

All Voting is Local, Committee of Seventy, and Common Cause joined to do a study: Ballots for All: Holding Pennsylvania County Jails Accountable for Providing Ballot Access.

Currently, Pennsylvania county jails do not have a universal process for voter registration, voting by mail, or voter education. In 2021 These groups utilized Pennsylvania's right-to-know request statute to determine whether Pennsylvania county jails are ensuring each eligible voter has an equal opportunity to vote in each election. In March of 2021 public record requests went to 61 county jails in Pennsylvania. The survey covered four areas: policies, procedures, methods to register and apply for a mail-in-ballot, and visitation policies and procedures. 75% of the counties responded. Thirteen counties (28%), Chester County included had brief policies with vague language related to voting and voter registration, and a detailed policy about voting procedures, and a detailed policy about visitation. Since the pandemic visitation at Chester County Prison is still somewhat restricted.

Our committee is pleased that Chester County Prison has a plan in place. We would like to know more. Would some of our information on voting and registration be useful? Can we help in any way?



The speaker at the annual meeting, Celeste Trusty is flanked by Terrance and Dennis Lewis with Lee Horton to the right. The three men were all falsely accused of crimes and spent years in prison. Their presentation was passionate and moving.

Report on 2023 League of Women Voters Pennsylvania Convention

The convention was held at the Crown Plaza in Harrisburg from Friday June 16 to Sunday June 18. The main event on Friday was a tour of the state capitol building. We have a stunningly beautiful capitol building. The design is based on Renaissance European architecture with a large dash of Baroque décor and Americana paintings. There is a nod to the arts and crafts movement of the early 20th century with two acres of Mercer floor tiles. If you have not yet made a visit to the state capitol building, it is worth the trip to Harrisburg.

Later on, Friday afternoon, there were some breakout sessions scheduled including a discussion group on Juneteenth and Its Significance or the League and a Caucus on Special Education Funding. Later in the evening was a Welcome Reception co-hosted by the National Council of Negro Women-PA.

After breakfast on Saturday morning were three more breakout groups. A discussion on Growing Diverse Membership, and two Caucuses. One called "Climate Crisis, Next Steps" and the other on a proposed study of the LWVPA Legislature Position.

At 9:30 the convention was convened, and we all learned how to use an electronic voting system. Once everyone got the hang of it, it worked quite well. The first vote was for the adoption of the rules for the convention. After the president's address we received the treasurer's report and voted on the budget for the fiscal year 24-25. We voted on amendments to the by-laws. Some produced heated discussion while others passed very quickly. There was a professional who advised on Robert's Rules of Order when things seemed to be getting confused. The keynote address was presented by Kandida Kenner of the New Pennsylvania Project which is working to register voters of color. After her speech, we looked into the future and then voted on the upcoming board. During the dinner Saturday evening, we heard the executive director's report and the awards presentation.

Sunday morning there were three more breakout rooms. There were two discussion groups: LWVPA board structure taskforce and navigating nonpartisanship during a hyper-partisan time. There were also two partner presentations: Meet Fair Districts PA and Meet PA Youth Vote. At 9:30 we all met again to vote on adjustments to the wording of LWVPA's position on Natural Resources and Social Policy. The information needed to be clarified and updated. When the voting was completed, several League chapters provided suggestions for guidance to the board. It was the end of a stimulating if tiring convention.

Elaine Friedlander

From the left: Janice Shreffler, Kay Sharp and Elaine Friedlander in the capitol building while attending the LWVPA state convention.



Everyone who took the tour of the capitol building.

