



April, 2024

lwvccpa.org

## A Message From the President

Now would appear to be a good time for us to review, think about and study the meaning of the significance of and the current state of “The Rule of Law” in our politics today. Surely, most of us have not considered the possibility of this critically important policy to be dropped, changed or misused as we are observing. It is being tested!

Have we had political candidates in our lifetime that tested and succeeded in disregarding this critically important concept?

The rule of law has been around for a very long time. “Many societies have developed institutions and procedures to make the rule of law a reality.” We continue to understand what is necessary to achieve it. The rule of law was an Article of the Magna Carta signed by King John of England. “A person’s fate should not be in the hands of a single individual.”

The concept of “Due Process” also began to form during this time. Our Constitution presented the concept of separation of powers and each branch of our government has some level of control or oversight over the actions of the other branches. “The key point is to ensure that no one in the government has so much power that they can act above the law.

Citizens respect for the law is critical, even the simple ones regarding stop signs and traffic signals. Our agreement to follow certain laws and rules affords us the social contract that provides us with social order.

We must pay close attention to the security and the adherence to the Rule of Law by all citizens, no matter their class, educational status their political position.

Elections are rapidly approaching, and we need to clearly understand how all of our candidates consider the Rule of Law in their personal lives as well as their public lives.

The concept carries a multitude of opportunities for our League members to consider as well as study. I know that I intend to do so, and I hope that you will too!

Stay well, stay safe and VOTE!

Susan Carty, President LWVCC



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

610-644-5960

*Annual Meeting*

**TUESDAY JUNE 11, 2024**

**6PM**

**Join us for Dinner and Presentation**

**“BETWEEN VOTING and WINNING:THE WHAT  
and WHY OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE”**

**Dr. Sharon Ann Holt (she/her)**

**Retired History Professor Penn State University**

**Downingtown Country Club (near Wegmans)**

**93 Country Club Drive**

**Downingtown, PA 19335**

**\$35 per person**

**Join us and reserve your spot.**

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

**or send checks to:**

**LWVCC, PO Box 62, Exton PA 19341**

Upcoming Dates:

**LWVCC Board Meeting**, Saturday April 20, 10:00AM, East Goshen Twp. Building, 1580 Paoli Pike, West Chester, PA 19380. For the near future we will have in-person meetings only.

Tuesday June 11, 2024, **Annual meeting**. See previous page.

## April 23, 2024 is the Primary Election

[Polls](#) are open on election day from **7 A.M. - 8 P.M.**

Last day to [register to vote](#): **April 8, 2024**

Last day to [request a mail-in or absentee ballot](#): **April 16, 2024**

## November 5, 2024 is the General Election

[Polls](#) are open on election day from **7 A.M. - 8 P.M.**

Last day to [register to vote](#): **October 21, 2024**

Last day to [request a mail-in or absentee ballot](#): **October 29, 2024**

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE

There are 62,000 people incarcerated in Pennsylvania. 81,000 children have a parent who is currently incarcerated. It costs \$58 million each year to pay for these prisoners. The human and financial costs are staggering. There are many spoken reasons for mass incarceration. Much that is believed has been found to not be based on current data. Below I will talk about 10 of myths believed, and research that counters these myths..

Myth 1: Private prisoners are the correct heart of mass incarceration.

Data shows that 8% of current prisoners are housed in private prisons.

Myth 2: Prisons are “factories behind fences” that exist to provide companies with a huge slave labor force.

Less than 1%, about 6,000, people in prison are employed by private companies.

Myth 3: Releasing “non violent” drug offenders would end mass incarceration.

4 out of 5 people in prison or jails are locked up for something other than drug offences. 1 out of 4 prisoners are locked up for drug offenses.

Myth 4: By definition “violent crime” involved physical harm.

What we consider “violent crime” means different things across the United States. For example, some prisoners have been called a “violent” criminal for purse-snatching, manufacturing methamphetamines and stealing drugs.

Myth 5: People in prison for violent or sexual crimes are too dangerous to be released.

This assumes that those prisoners cannot be rehabilitated. People who have been convicted for rape or sexual assault are 20% lower than all convictions for the other offence categories together. They are less likely to be convicted again, least likely to be incarcerated again, least likely to be sentenced to prison again.

Myth 6: Reforming the criminal legal system leads to more crime.

Overall, the crime rate is the lowest it has been since 1963.

Myth 7: Harsh punishments deter crime, making us safer.

This is a common belief, that long sentences paired with austere living conditions and even a brutal environment will reduce crimes. Data shows that harsher sentences do not provide a good example that would prevent new people from committing a crime.

Myth 8: Crime victims support long prison sentences.

Many victims, when asked, believe that what is needed is violence prevention, not incarceration.

Myth 9: Some people need to go to jail to get treatment and services.

It’s true that people need treatment and services but prison does not provide those. For example, between 2000 and 2018 the number of people who died of intoxication while in jail increased 400%. Suicide is the leading cause of death in jail, with higher death rates more than in some states.

Myth 10: Expanding community supervision is the best way to reduce incarceration.

Many people in prison and jail need treatment for mental health conditions, drug use abatement, or physical health conditions. Prison does very little of this care. It is thought that the community services provided address these conditions. Community in reality has provided a limited amount of these needed services. Some prisoners have been convicted of a crime in the community because of unavailability.

Our country has many misleading beliefs about crime and punishment. It is time for us to consider what we want to do about our jails and prisons. It is important to look at our next steps to take. Much has been tried, there is much left to be done. We can look at other countries. What do they do as a country to address this problem? What has worked for them to address justice for their citizens there.? Perhaps we need to consider the Scandinavian countries as a place to start.

Kay Sharp, Criminal Justice Committee

(Source: Criminal Justice Research Library)

# Earth Day in West Chester

West Chester Green Team, Unitarian Congregation of West Chester and West Chester Cooperative sponsor

## Earth Day Rally & Celebration: Planet vs Plastic

April 20, 2024

**Rally @ Chester County Courthouse, 2 N High St., West Chester**

3:00pm: Rally featuring:

- State Senator Carolyn Comitta,
- State Representative Chris Pielli,
- County Commissioner Josh Maxwell

4:15pm: Former Mayor Jordan Norley leads march for Earth's support from Courthouse to Unitarian Congregation



Unsplash



"Nature Hand" by Dawn Mozzane



"Koi" Painting by Denise Vitello, www.denisevitello.com

**Celebration @ Unitarian Congregation of West Chester, 501 S High St., West Chester**

4:30pm: Earth Day Celebration:

- Keynote Speaker: Eastern Pennsylvania Director for Clean Water Action Maurice Sampson II speaks on Environmental Justice
- Tables by 12 environmental groups
- Mexican Buffet with vegetarian options--includes drinks & dessert



Follow the QR code or go to WCGT's website for more information!

Voting is the expression of our commitment to ourselves, one another, this country and this world. Sharon Salzberg