

# League of Women Voters Bloomington - Monroe County

## League Letter – April 2017

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### Calendar

- April 8** Legislative Update, 9:30 a.m., City Council Chambers (This is our last update.)
- April 8** Member meeting, 1:30-3:00 p.m., Monroe County Public Library Room 1B-1C (Note that this is a Saturday afternoon.)
- April 10** Board meeting, 7:00 p.m., Bell Trace Community Room
- April 29-30** LWVIN Convention, South Bend (See info inside.)
- May 7** Annual meeting, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Monroe County Public Library Room 1B-1C (Note that this is a Sunday afternoon.)

### What's Inside

*President's Letter*  
*League Updates*  
*Advocacy and Activism*  
*Reports on Voter Service*

### Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through advocacy and education.

## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER – Kate Cruikshank**



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Our March 1 member meeting was an exciting one, with so many new members injecting new energy into thinking about what our program for 2017-2018 might be. We had groups working on how to tackle supporting teachers to improve civic education, what approaches we might take to voter registration efforts, how we might improve our work in voter education, what forms voter information might take, and how best to orient new members to the League.

Membership chair Ann Heath, who has been doing a marvelous job these last few years, is working with a team of both longtime and new members on small group gatherings and developing materials for new members. If you'd like to have input or otherwise be part of that, please let Ann know at [awheath504@comcast.net](mailto:awheath504@comcast.net).

Our April 8 member meeting will continue both the small and large group conversations, with the addition of a few more possibilities, such as the Officials List (please see the article on that below). Our goal will be to lay out in at least general terms what we'd like to pursue over the next year. We'll want to have that in a form the board can look at during its April 10 meeting and that we can then send out to all our members so that they will have it, as our bylaws say they must, three weeks before our annual meeting.

I am hoping that the day and time change for the member meeting will be a positive one, although I know it is almost impossible to find a day and time that works for everyone. But, please do your best to attend and help us chart our course for the coming year. And definitely plan to attend our annual meeting on May 7!

-- Kate Cruikshank

## **League Updates**

### **EXPANDING OUR TAX-EXEMPT STATUS – Kate Cruikshank**

You may be aware of the fact that the LWVBM Ed Fund is tax-exempt under the strictest IRS regulations, meaning that it is a "501(c)(3)" non-profit entity. This has been true for the national and state Leagues as well, which were themselves, like the LWVBM, registered as 501(c)(4) entities, for which a limited amount of lobbying activity was permitted.

For years the League at all levels has been careful to keep any expenditures for lobbying activity separate from Ed Fund monies, since any violation could result in loss of its tax-exempt status. However, in recent years the IRS has articulated standards that make it clear that even the national and state Leagues, which engage fairly consistently in lobbying activity, run almost no risk of exceeding the allowable limit, which is 20% of annual expenditures.

It, therefore, makes no sense to have two separate entities with two separate sets of bookkeeping, and so the LWVIN, which provides an umbrella for many local Leagues, is now converting to

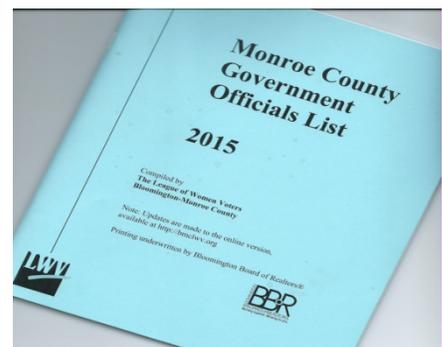
501(c)(3) status. Since we also have two separate entities, the board of the LWVBMC has decided to seek approval from you, our members, at the annual meeting to merge the LWVBMC and the LWVBMC Ed Fund so that we also will be a single 501(c)(3) entity. This will have the benefit not only of making the life of our treasurer considerably easier but of making all contributions to our League tax-deductible.

Following our bylaws, we'll be sending out the materials that need to be acted on at the annual meeting three weeks in advance. The process will involve approving amendments to our LWVBMC Articles of Incorporation and bylaws, then approval of an Agreement of Merger for the LWVBMC and the Ed Fund, with the result, after filings with the Secretary of State and the IRS, that we will have one entity, the LWVBMC but with full 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

For those of you who might be inclined to worry about whether we will be in danger of exceeding the lobbying activity limit, our co-presidents of the LWVIN point out that when they, as official representatives of the LWVIN, go to the statehouse to talk with legislators in support of or against legislation or to testify, they are lobbying. This would also be true of the LWVBMC president or anyone else authorized by the board to approach legislators with the specific purpose of influencing legislation. So any expenses incurred (travel, for instance) in order to do this would be considered lobbying expenses, and we will need to keep track of those. But all of our other advocacy, political activity, and voter education work is not considered lobbying, so the chances of our exceeding the 20% limit are virtually nil.

## Rethinking the Officials List -- Kate Cruikshank

As longtime members will know, one of the major public service projects of our League was for decades the annual publication of the *Monroe County Governmental Officials List*, a booklet that brought together information on all of our elected officials, departments, and citizen boards and commissions, including their terms of office and, in the case of boards and commissions, by whom they were appointed. With financial support solicited from businesses in the community, we were able to print and distribute over a thousand copies every year.



A combination of factors brought us to the point where the board decided not to try to produce an *Officials List* for 2016, in part because almost all of the information seemed to be available online, in part because the printed edition was bound to be out-of-date upon publication because of the fluidity in board and commission appointments, and in part for lack of financial and human resources. In addition, members of at least two commissions challenged the fact that we had been including home phone numbers and addresses, which they did not feel was appropriate, and noted that we had not included email addresses, which they felt we should. Feeling that this project was simply too big to tackle with the limited human resources we had, we let it lapse, realizing that we had no way of knowing whether anyone would miss it or not.

While we have not been inundated with requests, there have been at least three people who have contacted me to indicate that they really miss the *Officials List*, one of whom indicated that it was an indispensable aid in his own agency's work within the community and to the extent that he would be

willing to try to help finance it. While he was hesitant to suggest that we should do all the work of compiling it for his sake, he obviously felt strongly about the public service that it had provided and may well be reflective of many others who have not felt free to let us know. As he pointed out, all or nearly all of the information may be online, but it takes a lot longer to find it, and it is not all in one place. In the context of voter service work, I can attest as well to the amount of time it saved me to be able to flip the booklet open and find what I needed at once.

So the question is whether we have a few people who would want to work on rethinking and producing the Officials List, perhaps in both an online and print form. This is a project that generally takes up some concentrated time February through April, since that is when most appointments to boards and commissions are finalized; and it involves working with staff members of both city and county as well as Ellettsville, and Stinesville to get the needed information. But, it is a fairly self-contained project, and we have longtime members who can share their experiences from past years to make the project easier.

We'll be looking at this possibility at the April 8 member meeting, but if you are interested and can't attend that meeting, please let me know: [cruiksha@indiana.edu](mailto:cruiksha@indiana.edu) .

## Advocacy and Activism

### **BE AN OBSERVER -- George Hegeman**

A rewarding and important job for League members is to serve as an "observer." Members of the Observer Corps, coordinated by Diedre Todd ([diedretodd@alumni.iu.edu](mailto:diedretodd@alumni.iu.edu)), are the eyes and ears of the League. They watch as members of the City and County boards, commissions and regional agencies (units) conduct the public business. Observers attend the meetings of specific units on a regular basis, get to learn how that particular corner of City and County government works, make new friends, and report on important aspects of their unit's activities by reporting to the LWV BMC Board or by authoring articles for the League Letter.

Observers are encouraged to introduce themselves to the convener and members before meetings and may be identified by a League badge or button. Observers may ask questions for clarification during meetings, but may not actively represent the League by making statements or comments or taking part in discussions. The main job of the observer is to record events and register impressions --but the very presence of an observer tends to keep proceedings honest and civil. Recordings and broadcasts by CATS are useful, but fail to adequately capture nuances or to follow complex questions, discussions laden with acronyms, or issues with a long history.

Of the 77 local units, some are of more interest to LWV BMC than others because of our mission. Currently, the League has openings for observers for the following units: Economic Development Commission, Utilities Service Board, Environmental Commission, Human Rights Commission, County Plan Commission, City Council, Storm Water Management Board, and County Council.

These units meet regularly, and regular attendance by observers is expected. Part-timers who can fill in as alternates during vacations or in case of illness are very welcome. Sharing an observer assignment is also a possibility. Times, dates and places of unit meetings are available by a call to

the Mayor's or County Commissioner's offices, a visit to their web sites, or by contacting Diedre Todd.

Past and current observers cite valuable insights they have gained into the functioning of local government and meeting the players. They also report making many new friends and enjoying being at the center of important local developments.

## **SHOULD NICOTINE VAPORIZERS BE BANNED LOCALLY?—**

George Hegeman, Observer for the Monroe County Health Board



The Monroe County Health Board, MCHB, has supported adding the use of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), also called “vaporizers,” to the Monroe County ordinance that bans smoking in public places. After discussion at a recent meeting, the County Commissioners did not agree.

Opponents of the proposed addition (and banning from public use) of ENDS point out that such a ban might prevent demonstration and sale of the devices in local stores by merchants, several of whom appeared at the meeting. Others pointed to cases, with which they were familiar, in which the devices were successfully used to cure or decrease dependence on nicotine by smokers by allowing a graded reduction in dosage over time. Still others argued that none of the known carcinogens contained in tobacco smoke are released by “vaping,” so there is no potential harm to the public.

Dr. Carol Touloukian, speaking for the Health Board, pointed out that the specific chemical composition of the vapor released during “vaping” is not known, but some potential for harm to the public by second hand vapor is possible. She added that, while ENDS may help some cease their dependence on nicotine (and tobacco), many smokers use both ENDS and tobacco--the ENDS often being used in settings where the “yuk” factor of smoking may be more objectionable, hence ENDS may prolong tobacco smoking by many. The FDA has not approved ENDS for smoking cessation despite anecdotal evidence that ENDS may be so used. She also pointed out that ENDS and the fluids used in them seem specifically designed to appeal to and are marketed to the young (typical fluid flavors are “strawberry” and “bubble gum”), hence ENDS are a gateway or extension to tobacco use. Statistics on use by young smokers support this idea. There is also evidence that ENDS devices are used to self-administer other drugs. The fluids used in ENDS are toxic due to their nicotine content and are unregulated.

The MCHB will probably submit revised wording for a County ordinance that allows ENDS use and demonstration in shops dedicated in whole or part to selling the devices.

Similar revisions to the Bloomington City Smoking ordinance banning ENDS in public will be presented on April 5th at the City Council meeting, with a hearing and public comment to be heard at the April 12th Council meeting, with a final vote to be held on April 19th.

## COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN PAY EQUITY DISCUSSION – Regina Moore

At 2:00 p.m. this Sunday, April 2 in Council Chambers at City Hall (401 N. Morton St.), the Monroe County Women's Commission and the City of Bloomington's Commission on the Status of Women will convene a panel to discuss *Pay Equity: Lilly Ledbetter's Story and You*.

The panel will focus on the following phenomenon:

- Women get paid 78 cents for every \$1.00 men get paid.
- A woman would need to work from January 1, 2016 until April 4, 2017 to earn what a man would earn in the year 2016.

Sharing their personal and professional perspectives on Pay Equity will be:

- Emma Cannon, Senior, Bloomington High School North
- Jeb Conrad, President and CEO, Bloomington Greater Chamber of Commerce
- Lynn Duggan, Associate Professor of Labor Studies at Indiana University
- Linda Lawson, Indiana State Representative, District 1
- Quincy Sauer, Labor and Employment Attorney, Macey and Swanson, Indianapolis

The panel's moderator will be Liz Feitl, AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison, United Way Monroe County.

Lilly Ledbetter was an overnight supervisor at the Alabama Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company for 19 years. She filed a sex discrimination case against Goodyear, which went all the way to the Supreme Court and inspired the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act, the first piece of legislation that President Obama signed in 2009.

This is a child-friendly and free event, open to the public.

**For more information, please contact:**

Liz Feitl, AFL-CIO Community Service Liaison, United Way Monroe County, [liz@monroeuitedway.org](mailto:liz@monroeuitedway.org), [812-334-8370](tel:812-334-8370)

## Reports on Voter Service

### LAST LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

As the last newsletter noted, the end of the legislative session is now scheduled for April 21 or 22, so our previously scheduled last legislative update on May 13 has been *anceled*. April 6 is the last day that votes will be taken in both house and senate, which means that the work of the legislators, except for those on conference committees, will essentially be over two days before our April 8 legislative update. Scheduling another update three weeks later really doesn't make any sense, so please remove the April 29 legislative update from your calendars.

**We therefore have only one more legislative update, and that is on April 8 in the City Council chambers at 9:30 a.m.** Please plan to attend.

## Citizen Info

### Who are my elected officials?

[indianavoters.com](http://indianavoters.com)

### Where do I find a bill list for the Indiana General Assembly?

[iga.in.gov](http://iga.in.gov)

Look under the "Legislation" tab

### How do I check the Indiana General Assembly committee schedule?

[iga.in.gov](http://iga.in.gov)

Look under the "Committees" tab or under "Bill Actions" for the specific bill you are following.

### What is the phone number for the Indiana House of Representatives?

(317) 232-9600  
(800) 382-9842

### What is the phone number for the Indiana Senate?

(317) 232-9400  
(800) 382-9467

## LWVIN Convention

The 2017 LWVIN Convention will be held in South Bend **Saturday, April 29 & 30** at the Holiday Inn Mishawaka Conference Center, 1208 E. Douglas Road, Mishawaka, IN 46545.

**Registration:** The deadline is **April 21** and costs \$60 per attendee. Preferred payment is with credit card via PayPal. Leagues may register up to five (5) attendees with this system. Registering for more than five people? Email [league@lwvin.org](mailto:league@lwvin.org).

You may register after determining with local leadership if you are serving as a voting delegate. All members may attend, but not all members may vote. Each League may send their president and one (1) additional member as a voting delegate. Leagues with more than twenty (20) members may send one (1) additional delegate per twenty (20) members based on the January 21, 2017 member count.

**Lodging:** You can make your reservation for lodging with the [Holiday Inn](#). If you enter the conference dates – arrival on April 28 or 29 and departure April 30 -- the group code will automatically be entered. Or, call 1-877-834-3613 and use the Group Code LOW. Rooms are \$95.00 per night (\$107.35 with taxes and fees) through **April 15**.

**Silent Auction:** The silent auction is an important fund raiser for the League and provides, among other projects, \$300 grants to local Leagues for their education projects. We are asking for contributions from all local Leagues. Please bring your items with you to the convention. LWV of the South Bend Area member Sheila Niezgodski is this year's Silent Auction Chair and can be contacted at [Sniezgodski@gmail.com](mailto:Sniezgodski@gmail.com)

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