

League of Women Voters Bloomington - Monroe County

League Letter – August 2016



Calendar

- Aug 3 Voter Service Committee Meeting, 11:30 a.m., MCPL Room 2A
- Aug 8 Board meeting, 7:00 p.m., Bell Trace Community Room

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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.



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER - Kate Cruikshank

With the completion of the political conventions, we now see the choices before us in terms of candidates and values for the executive leadership of our country. As many have said, this election may be the most important of our lifetime in terms of the radically different directions in which we could be led, depending on its outcome. The heightened interest in the election provides us with an important opportunity to examine and discuss our fundamental democratic values and processes. For many of us, it is also a time when it is very hard to remain nonpartisan!

Our Voter Service Committee will be meeting on August 3 to finalize the questions for the Keys to the Candidates. I hope you will be as concerned as I am that my call to the membership to contribute questions resulted in only two responses. There have been numerous issues in county government over the last year; should those not play into what we ask of the candidates? Are we as League members carrying out the role we claim as monitors of democracy in our community? Do we consider that enough of a priority to devote some time and thought to it?

I was struck during the July 4 parade by the number of people who called out approval of the League of Women Voters, yet I am painfully aware of how few of us are carrying the load for maintaining our work and our reputation in the community. As I look ahead to the end of my presidency next spring, I am worried that we have not developed a pipeline for leadership development. While the demands of our working lives make a commitment to the League difficult, it has been my hope that we might attract more recent retirees who have had to postpone work in public service until their retirement. But we need to find those potential colleagues and invite them to join us. This is a job for all of us, not just our membership chair or our board. Please think about who among your acquaintances might be potential League members and invite them to join us.

-- Kate

Messages from the Board

LWVBMC BYLAWS CHANGE

In order to align our bylaws with the changes in the LWVUS bylaws reported in the July newsletter, Article III, Section 2 of our bylaws has been changed to read:

ARTICLE III: Membership

Section 2: Voting Members

- A. Persons at least 16 years of age who join the League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County shall be voting members of that League and of the LWVIN and LWVUS.

- B. Any person who has been a voting member of the League for 50 years or more shall be a life member and be excused from payment of dues.

Note that this lowers the age of members to 16 years, does not require that they be U.S. citizens, and eliminates the associate membership. Because these changes were approved by the LWVUS convention, we are obligated to make these changes administratively rather than treating them as a change to be approved or rejected by the membership.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL - Ann Heath

It's that time again – your annual opportunity to continue to support the League's work in Bloomington, Indiana, and throughout the USA.

If you haven't already sent in your membership renewal, please print out the form at <http://bmclwv.org/pdfs/Membership%20form%202016-2017.pdf> or <http://tinyurl.com/hqge46w> and send it, with your check for dues and any contribution you may wish to make, to the address at the bottom of the form.

Reports on Program

REDISTRICTING UPDATE

Concerned League members and others packed the Indiana House chamber and two-thirds of the gallery for the July 7 meeting of the Special Interim Study Committee on Redistricting. Michael Li of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University presented to the committee a structure for developing a commission for redistricting independent of the legislature leadership and also addressed the strategy session sponsored by Common Cause and the LWVIN preceding the meeting. The second presentation, by Ed Cook of the Iowa Legislative Services Agency via Skype, covered in detail how the Iowa approach is structured and the results it achieves. With questions from the committee members, the meeting ran to nearly three hours, but there are clearly at least two members who feel there is no need for any change. Both presentations and Michael Li's slides as well as the minutes can be accessed via the July 7 Meeting Agenda tab at https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2016/committees/redistricting_special_interim_study_committee_on

Chairman Jerry Torr has scheduled two more meetings as promised. The agenda for the September 19 meeting will be (1) committee discussion; and (2) public comment; regarding possible contents for the committee's final report. The October 17 meeting agenda is (1) committee discussion; and (2) public comment; concerning the committee's proposed final report, including possible amendments to the proposed final report. Both meetings will again be held in the House chamber at 1:00 p.m. and will need our attendance in order to continue to emphasize our support for a citizen-led redistricting commission.



Pat Harris and George Hegeman



Back of House chamber



Michael Li of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University



Presentation via Skype by Ed Cook of the Iowa Legislative Services Agency



Kathy Byers at the meeting

COUNTY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS - Save the dates!

Plans are underway for two voter education programs on county government, tentatively scheduled for September 6 and September 15. On September 6, two veterans of the county council will talk about the responsibilities of the council, the experience of doing its work, and what qualities are necessary to do that work well. On September 15, the same format will address the responsibilities and work of the county commissioners. Both programs will be held at the Monroe County Public Library, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Reports on Voter Service

KEYS TO THE CANDIDATES

The call went out to League members on July 17 to contribute questions for the Keys to the Candidates, and two people responded. Kate's letter to the editor published July 22 and other contacts elicited six responses. The Voter Education Committee will devote a good portion of its August 3 meeting to pulling together the final list of questions. That meeting is in MCPL Room 2A at 11:30 a.m.

VOTING SYSTEM CERTIFICATION

The threat of decertification of our voting system has passed for the moment as a result of a resolution approved at the July 27 meeting of the Indiana Election Commission which censured Hart Intercivic but did not withdraw certification of its system. Deadlines for further updates by Hart have been set. It appears that the problem of a difference in interpretation of the statute in question still remains to be resolved, but that will be dealt with after the November election.

CANDIDATE FORUMS - Save the dates!

Candidate forums are tentatively set for September 20, 22, 27, 28, 29 and possibly October 5 if there are competitive races for the Richland-Bean Blossom Community School Corporation School Board.

MCCSC OPEN HOUSES - Ann Heath

BE A VOTER – People Have to Register First!

Once again, League volunteers will staff voter registration and information tables at all twenty two back-to-school Open Houses in MCCSC. These events take place between August 10 and September 1.

We hope to have two volunteers for each event, as well as a substitute who will be called upon if necessary. There are still a few open slots on the schedule. If you can help out for a couple of hours in the early evening, visit the online sign up at:

www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B49A4AA2EA4F85-school

Thanks!

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