

League of Women Voters Bloomington - Monroe County

League Letter – December 2016



Calendar

- Dec 7 Member meeting: LWVIN Education Study
MCPL Room 2A, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
- Dec 12 Board meeting, Bell Trace Community Room, 7:00 p.m.
- Jan 4 Member meeting: LWVIN Education Study Consensus Meeting and
Local Planning, MCPL Room 2A, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
- Jan 7 Legislative Update, City Council Chambers, 9:30 - 11:00 a.m.

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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

Our newsletter is brief this month, in part due to the upcoming holidays, which may come as a relief if you have been conscientiously reading past issues (which of course I hope you have!). But I would call your attention to three things in it: (1) the dates for our legislative updates, which will be here before we know it; (2) my call for building an action list of people willing to respond quickly to contact legislators in support of redistricting reform; and (3) Albrecht Holschuh's

wonderful project, still developing, to provide support for those who lack the documentation to be able to register to vote. This last is a clear example of a long-range project that is perfect for us to undertake and develop in this period when we do not have an election bearing down upon us (although voter registration reopened on December 1, we need to remember.)

I suspect that many of us are still trying to process the results of the election and the way the plans for the new administration are unfolding as well as a new configuration of voices that we are now hearing in the media. While it is unnerving to have things shaken up on a moment-to-moment basis, it may not be bad for those of us who have perhaps complacently assumed that we had the answers to be forced to take another look. As I read Sunday's feature article in the H-T on the development of the Traditionalist Worker Party in Paoli, I realized that I don't know what it's like to live in a mobile home park with no prospects of bettering my situation and a sense that no one really cares. I do know what it's like to be facing possible poverty in middle age without a support network, but that isn't quite the same (although it was terrifying), and I had the hope that my education would somehow help me through (which it and a strong dose of luck eventually did). Those of us trying to make sense of all of this are working hard at creating categories for those we don't understand that will give us a satisfying explanation of what is going on, but I'm a little worried that those categories become the barriers we can't breach, the walls that just divide us further.

As I read the H-T article, there seemed to be glimmers of common ground, such as their desire to "opt out of working to benefit the globalist agenda of international corporations," their view that globalism "takes our ability to govern ourselves and gives it to oligarchs that don't have our best interests at heart," and the sense that people were described as feeling, of "being 'left behind' by their political representatives." These sound surprisingly close to sentiments voiced in some of our discussions of money in politics, the power of corporations, and the need for redistricting reform. But if we focus only on the potential for white supremacist movements and the potential horror of where that could go, our chances of hearing anything else are pretty slim. This raises such hard questions. Shall we focus on demonizing each other in the abstract and forego the possibility of connecting with each other as individual human beings? Doesn't that boil down to both sides engaging in the same thing? Does that strengthen or weaken our efforts to make manifest our democratic ideals?

I've been reading a lot to try to find some possible paths out of the wilderness, so to speak, and am sharing some of that in the Book Notes section of this newsletter, which I hope might become a place where all of you would be willing share your reading and thoughts in the months ahead.

Best wishes for the holidays -- Kate

Call for Nominations

SEEKING BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2017-2018

Our nominating committee will be seeking nominations right after the holidays for president, secretary, and three directors. More details will follow in the January newsletter, but please be thinking if you would be willing to help.

Report on Program

REDISTRICTING REFORM ACTION LIST -- Kate Cruikshank

The chances are very good that legislation will be introduced in the upcoming legislative session to establish a nonpartisan redistricting committee for congressional districts and Indiana House and Senate districts. The draft legislation that I shared with you in the last issue has several problems, but it is miles ahead of where we are now, and it can be improved as it goes through the process.

Our only hope of accomplishing this task, which is so basic to our representative democracy, is for us to make sure our legislators know that we are not losing interest. Sheila Seuss Kennedy, one of the citizen members of the Special Interim Study Committee that managed to generate the draft legislation, pointed out to me in the parking lot of the statehouse after the last meeting that they would never have gotten to that point if we had not come to every meeting and packed the House chamber.

I am going to be monitoring this closely and is putting together an email list of people who are willing to be ready to send emails or phone when we need to take action. I'll send you all the info -- whom to contact and how, the main point to emphasize, and what the deadline is. Since there are very narrow windows in which we can hope to have an effect, this will mean checking your email regularly in order to respond quickly.

If you would like to be part of this action list, please email me at cruiksha@indiana.edu .

Reports on Voter Service

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES - SAVE THE DATES!

Our legislative updates are now scheduled for the City Council chambers on January 7, February 4, March 4, April 8, and May 13 at the usual time of 9:30-11:00 a.m. Please note that the first three are on the first Saturday of the month, the last two on the second Saturday of the month. This is necessary in order to avoid conflicts with other major city events. So save the dates. Kate will be putting out the call for volunteers to help right after Christmas.

VOTER REGISTRATION SUPPORT PROJECT - Albrecht Holschuh

It may be something a person has been meaning to do for years: register to vote. Before an election the incentives and the public pressure rise. As our T-shirts say: “Be a Voter!”

The obstacles never melt away. Maybe the person dislikes dealing with official rules, documents and offices. She or he may be handicapped. Transportation may be difficult to arrange or to pay for. How do I prove that I am a US citizen? I do not know where to find my birth certificate and, anyway, I was born in another state and my name has changed. How do I order new certificates and find the money to pay for them?

Our state League hears from older women who live alone and want to establish or reestablish their registration. Many unregistered citizens do not know who we are and that we want to help.

We talk to people as they pass our display tables. We hand out fliers with registration information. The work is important. People express gratitude. However, there are many potential voters we could help but do not reach.

LWVBMC is beginning to build the format and the tools for a small team that will support individual citizens seeking their birthright. The team is to be ready in any year and season, not merely during heated election campaigns.

A number of agencies and organizations in our county provide registration support. There are even sources for specialized assistance like research and legal advice. We will work with them. We will bring what few if any others can, especially personal consultation in the home and financial support if needed.

If you want to join the planning and/or the team, let me know at holschuh@indiana.edu or 812-345-8614.

Book Notes

SEEKING THE WAY FORWARD - Kate Cruikshank

Bernie Sanders, *Our Revolution* (2016). Sanders’ success in influencing the Democratic Party platform (and Clinton) made me want to see what the plan for “Our Revolution” is, if there is one. There is. The first part of the book is autobiographical, including the campaign but without belaboring it all, then the main second part of the book lays out the areas of focus and the actions we need to take. The emphasis is on “we.” Democracy as spectator sport isn’t there.

Ralph Nader, *Breaking Through Power* (2016) - aimed at breaking corporate domination, with lots of specifics

Ralph Nader, *Unstoppable: The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State* (2014) - provides specific examples of areas and efforts that could be built upon if we don’t get in our own way; very provocative thinking and lots of potential. But lots of “we” in this one as well.

LEAGUE LEADERSHIP:

President: Kate Cruikshank (cruiksha@indiana.com) (H) 812-339-6096 (C) 812-361-3969

Vice President: Albrecht Holschuh (holschuh@indiana.edu)

Secretary: Diane Legomsky (diane.legomsky@gmail.com)

Treasurer: Carol McGregor (ccmcgregor@aol.com)

Membership Chair: Ann Heath (awheath504@comcast.net)

Observer Corps: Diedre Todd (diedretodd@alumni.iu.edu)

Newsletter Editor: Doris Wittenburg (dwittenb@indiana.edu)

DIRECTORS:

Ann Heath (awheath504@comcast.net)

George Hegeman (hegemang@indiana.edu)

Peter Kaczmarczyk (ghouse2@yahoo.com)

Doris Wittenburg (dwittenb@indiana.edu)

PROGRAM COMMITTEE:

Kate Cruikshank (cruiksha@indiana.edu)

Velma Davis (cuchi2009@att.net)

Ann Heath (awheath504@comcast.net)

Albrecht Holschuh (holschuh@indiana.edu)

Diane Legomsky (diane.legomsky@gmail.com)

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:

Ann Heath, Chair (awheath504@comcast.net)

George Hegeman (hegemang@indiana.edu)

Carol Walter (carolwalter@sbcglobal.net)

VOTER SERVICE COMMITTEE:

Nancy Brinegar (bttnancy@bluemarble.net)

Kathy Byers (kvbyers@indiana.edu)

Kate Cruikshank (cruiksha@indiana.edu)

Susan Davis (susanbergdavis@hotmail.com)

Velma Davis (cuchi2009@att.net)

Kathy Dilcher (kdilch@hotmail.com)

Jan Ellis (ellis.jan@gmail.com)

Rachel Guglielmo (Rachel_guglielmo@yahoo.com)

Ann Heath (awheath504@comcast.net)

Peter Kaczmarczyk (ghouse2@yahoo.com)

Diane Legomsky (diane.legomsky@gmail.com)

Bill Milroy (milroy41.bm@gmail.com)

Laura Trout (ltrout@homefinder.org)

Allison Zimpfer-Hoerr (allison.marie.rogers@gmail.com)