

League of Women Voters

Bloomington - Monroe County



League Letter – March 2016

Calendar

- March 2 Member meeting: Local program planning, 11:30 a.m., MCPL Room 2A
- March 11 Voter Service Committee meeting, 11:30 a.m., MCPL Room 214
- March 14 Board meeting, 7:00 p.m., Bell Trace Community Room
- March 23 Women’s History Month Luncheon, 11:15 a.m., Bloomington Convention Center (see article inside)
- April 5 “Gerrymandering: The Movie,” 7:00 p.m., MCPL Auditorium
- May 4 Annual meeting, 6:30 p.m., MCPL Room 1B

Note: No Legislative Update in March.

What’s Inside

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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.

ANNUAL MEETING -- SAVE THE DATE!

Our annual meeting will be the evening of Wednesday, May 4, Monroe County Public Library, Room 1B. Come at 6:30 p.m. for beverages and dessert nibbles, then our annual business meeting and a good discussion about plans for the coming year. Please plan to attend!



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER: **Kate Cruikshank**

As you will know by now, LWVIN co-presidents Erin Kelley and Lisa Plencner have succeeded in setting up direct communications with all League members throughout the state. This is part of their effort to encourage networking and collaboration so that we can begin to exert a stronger influence statewide in combating the forces that are working against our democracy.

Working together is going to be crucial over the next few months if we are to have any chance of establishing an independent commission on redistricting in Indiana. Most members of the interim study committee appear not to want that to happen, and unless they can see that there are consequences for them at the polls, they will allow the study committee to play out its term without producing any legislation. It is therefore up to us as voters to make sure that they know we are expecting them to take action. And that means it is up to us as the League of Women Voters to educate those around us about the importance of this issue. Our scheduled viewing on April 5 of "Gerrymandering: The Movie" is a start, but we need to build informational activities and a planned schedule of letters to the editor around this. I'm sure some of you have ideas on how we might do this. Please let me know ASAP if you do. There are just a few short months in which to make this happen, and we must get started now if we are going to have any influence.

Likewise, the LWVIN Education Study just launched provides us the opportunity to work with Leagues around the state to begin to beat back the systematic assault on our public schools that we have been watching unfold. The information-gathering on high-stakes testing is a start toward building a position that will enable us as an organization to tackle breaking the stranglehold that such testing has had on our schools. The materials that the LWVIN is producing regarding vouchers also will enable us to educate ourselves and then collaborate to educate the general public about the consequences of the voucher program for public schools.

We thus have some exciting opportunities to work with our League colleagues from around the state on issues that are priorities for all of us. Please take a few minutes to think about what you care about in terms of protecting our democratic processes, protecting voter rights, breaking political party control of the redistricting process, protecting the funding of our public schools, and ensuring that our schools are first and foremost about providing quality education for each and every student. Do you have thoughts to share and a little bit of time to give? Is there an activity or action that you can envision being part of? There is not one of us who does not have something to offer to these terribly important efforts. Please let me hear from you. We need the rich resources of all our members in order to tackle this work.

Reports on Program

REDISTRICTING: LET'S KILL THE GERRYMANDER!



Now is our chance to force the issue on getting an independent commission established in Indiana to do redistricting. Our April 5 showing of “*Gerrymandering: The Movie*” is intended to bring this issue to the forefront for us and the community.

The Special Interim Committee on Redistricting was created by 2015 legislation for a two-year period, with the assignment of studying variations of independent redistricting commissions around the country and coming up with a recommendation by December 1, 2016, which would presumably become a bill in the 2017 legislature. It was supposed to meet twice in 2015, it met once, in October; it was supposed to have compiled a comprehensive report on redistricting commissions around the country by December 1, 2015, but the only thing that appears to be available is the presentation by staff at the October meeting. Their 3-page final report for 2015 was skeletal but did say that they would meet after the 2016 legislative session (although not how soon after).

The deadline for their final recommendation is December 1, 2016, and they have a tremendous amount of work to do to get there. There is a good deal of suspicion that they have no intention of coming up with potential legislation. So if we are going to get any action at all from them, there needs to be a statewide push to make the members realize that they’re being watched and that we expect action.

Even though none of our legislators is on the committee, letter-writing and email campaigns can let them know we are watching. Leagues around the state are already staging events, raising awareness of the importance of this issue. The MCPL is on board to collaborate with us to make this a major event. If you would like to work on ways to make this more than just one more program, please contact Kate Cruikshank, cruiksha@indiana.edu or 812-361-3969.



LWVIN EDUCATION STUDY LAUNCH

The LWVIN Education Committee needs our assistance. It has received board approval for a two-part consensus study over the coming year, the first part of which is an education and action effort with regard to **vouchers**, based on the existing LWVIN position on school finance, which states: “*The League opposes the diversion of public funds to nonpublic schools through vouchers, tuition tax credits, tax deductions, or choice scholarships.*” Materials to support this effort will be forthcoming.

The second part of the study focuses on **high-stakes testing in the schools**. As a first step, the committee is asking local Leagues to assist in information-gathering from local school administrators and teachers with regard to the costs, utility, and effects of high-stakes testing. They have developed materials and protocols to elicit by personal interview, compile, and report responses to the following questions:

1. How many standardized tests are given in K-12 each year? What are they?
2. How much does the school district pay for standardized test services and materials, results dissemination, etc.?
3. What is the recommended preparation for administering a standardized test?
4. What is the actual preparation for administering a standardized test?
5. In one academic year, how many class hours do students spend taking standardized tests?
6. What is the interval between the date when tests are administered and the date when the school receives full results?
7. How are test results shared with students and their families?
8. What can a student’s family learn about a student’s progress since the previous year?
9. For what district purposes are the test results used?
10. How are the standardized test results currently proving valuable or helpful to the district?
11. How are the standardized test results currently harming or causing problems to the district?
12. What, if anything, is being squeezed out of the annual curriculum by the need to prepare for and administer standardized tests?
13. What, if any, changes in student attitudes does the testing generate?

14. What, if any, changes in family attitudes does the testing generate?

This is an exciting opportunity to be part of the investigation by talking with our school administrators and teachers about high-stakes testing. If you would like to be part of the team gathering this information, please contact Kate Cruikshank, cruiksha@indiana.edu as soon as possible. The LWVIN committee is requesting reports of the results of our interviews by May 30.

Reports on Voter Service

VOTER SERVICE COMMITTEE – Diane Legomsky

The Voter Service Committee has been reaching out with high energy in its voter registration and *Get Out the Vote* efforts.

We are now working with the high schools, Ivy Tech, Indiana University, government agencies, MCPL, and special populations such as the homebound, seniors, and clients of social service agencies. Via these connections, and especially the energy and initiative of IU students, we will register residents and spread the word about registering and voting.

We are meeting with enthusiastic reception and support throughout our community, and are excited to put our plans into action. We still seek all participation possible from League membership. Our next meeting is Friday, March 11, at 11:30, at MCPL, Room 214.



News from the State Legislature

UPDATE ON PRESERVING VOTER INTENT

Senate Bill 61, which was described in last month's newsletter, has continued through the legislative process. This is the bill that will correct the Indiana Code instructions on how to count votes in races where more than one candidate may be selected and the voter has chosen to vote a straight-party ticket but chooses to deviate from that choice for such a race.

As reported last month, the bill was sent to the Senate floor on January 26 and received its "second hearing" there on January 28, during which five amendments were proposed. One, which was a technical addition to the language, passed. Senator Karen Tallian tried to incorporate through four

amendments the provisions of her own bill, which had not received a hearing in committee but which included such desirable changes as making local election board decisions dependent only on a majority vote, not a unanimous one. Those amendments failed to pass, and the bill was scheduled for “third reading” or a full Senate vote on February 1, when it passed 33 to 17.

It then went to the House and received its “first reading,” being assigned to the Elections and Apportionment Committee, which met on February 17 to discuss it and sent it to the House floor with a unanimous vote on February 24. It will receive its “second reading” on February 29, when it can again be amended on the House floor, and will presumably then be scheduled for “third reading,” meaning a vote of the full House.

The major issue in the House committee discussions has been how to best instruct voters that they must individually mark their choices in a race where more than one candidate may be chosen, if they have chosen to vote straight-party ticket but wish to deviate from that for that particular race. Options include the top of the ballot, before the specific race, and/or in the voting booth. These issues will very likely still be under discussion before the final version is agreed upon.

PETITION FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION



Of special interest in view of our study of the process of amending the Constitution is the fact that Senate Joint Resolution 14, calling for a constitutional convention, passed the senate and is now scheduled for a vote in the House. It reads as follows:

ENGROSSED SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION No. 14

A JOINT RESOLUTION requesting the Congress to call a constitutional convention for the purpose of proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States concerning imposition of fiscal restraints on the federal government, limitations of the powers and jurisdiction of federal powers, and the limitation of the terms of office for its officials and for members of Congress.

Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana:

SECTION 1. The legislature of the State of Indiana hereby applies to Congress, under the provisions of Article V of the Constitution of the United States, for the calling of a convention of the states limited to proposing amendments to the Constitution of the United States that impose fiscal restraints of the federal government, limit the power and

jurisdiction of the federal government, and limit the terms of office for its officials and for members of Congress.

SECTION 2. The secretary of state is hereby directed to transmit copies of this application to the President and Secretary of the United States Senate and to the Speaker and Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, and copies to the members of the said Senate and House of Representatives from this State; also to transmit copies hereof to the presiding officers of each of the legislative houses in the several States, requesting their cooperation.

SECTION 3. This application constitutes a continuing application in accordance with Article V of the Constitution of the United States until the legislatures of at least two-thirds of the several States have made applications on the same subject.

Matt Pierce tried to amend SJR 14 during its “second reading” in the House on February 25 to include a restriction of First Amendment rights to natural persons, but the amendment failed. It is scheduled for a vote on Monday, February 29, which means that by the time you read this, Indiana will presumably have joined the many states that have already passed such legislation. Nine other states have such legislation pending in their legislatures, and only six more petitions are needed before the constitutional requirement of two-thirds is reached, at which point Article V of the Constitution requires that Congress call a constitutional convention.

Events of Interest

Women's History Month Luncheon - March 23, 2016

The annual Women's History Month luncheon is planned by the Women's History Month Luncheon Committee, which is organized by the City of Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women. [Learn more about the commission.](#) Nearly 500 people from throughout the community attend the luncheon. The lunch serves as an opportunity to recognize individual and collective accomplishments of women in our community. In addition, organizations for women and women-owned businesses will exhibit at the luncheon, including your League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County.

The 31st Annual Women's History Month Luncheon will be held on Wednesday, March 23, 2016 at the Bloomington-Monroe County Convention Center, 302 S. College Avenue. The doors will open at 11:15 a.m. for viewing of women's exhibits and the program will begin at 12:00 p.m. and end at 1:30 p.m. The Woman of the Year and the Lifetime Contribution award recipients will be honored at the luncheon.

Tickets to the luncheon must be purchased through the BCT Box Office located at 114 E. Kirkwood Avenue. BCT Box Office, hours are 11am-6pm Mon-Fri and 12-5pm Sat-Sun, or go to [Buskirk-Chumley Theater](#) for more information. Cost is \$22.50 per seat.

As has been the case for many years, the League is one of the sponsors for this event and will have an exhibit there. We will be reserving at least one table of eight for our members at a cost of \$250 (\$31.25 apiece), with those reserving a seat at the table reimbursing the League for that cost. If sufficient members are interested to merit reserving a second table, we will do so, but we must know no later than Sunday, March 20. If you wish to sit at a table reserved for League members, please contact Doris Wittenburg at 812-336-4993 or dwittenb@indiana.edu. Checks for \$31.25 should be made to the LWVBMC and sent to Doris at 2505 E. Poplar Court, Bloomington, IN 47401.

Although it is traditional to have a reserved table for at least some League members, we might as individual members also consider the possibility of taking advantage of this opportunity to reach out to potential new members by wearing some form of League identification and scattering ourselves throughout the many tables of women activists and leaders in our community.

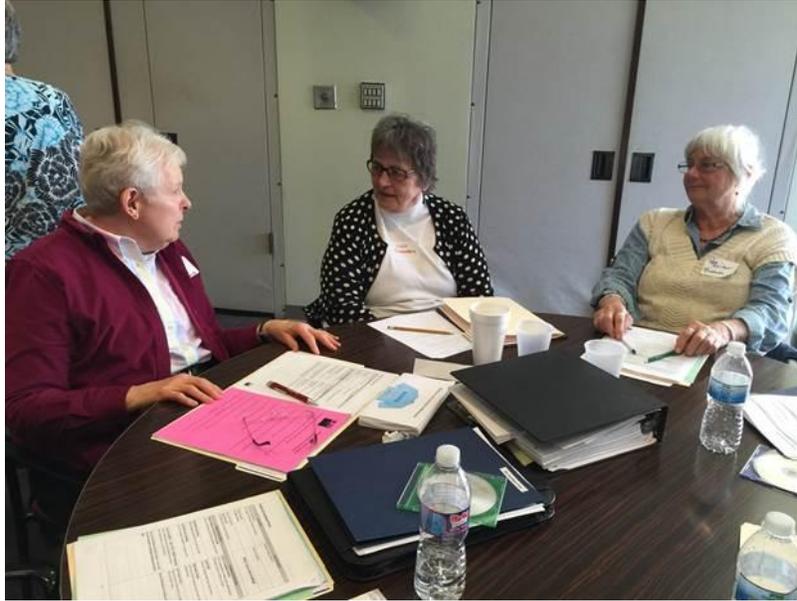
Whatever choice you make, we hope you will attend. This is truly one of Bloomington's outstanding annual civic events.

LWVIN PRESIDENTS' DAY

Over 50 League members from 15 of our local Leagues attended Presidents' Day in Indianapolis on February 20. The focus was twofold: how to do effective advocacy and how to partner and publicize to maximize the effect of our local events.

After an initial activity that sent us all over the room talking to each other, Debbie Asberry, who is heading up the Redistricting Reform advocacy push, gave us an update on her efforts in support of local League efforts throughout the state, highlighting the work of the Greater Lafayette League and the South Bend Area League, among others. Katie Blair, Advocacy Director for Freedom Indiana, an LGBT advocacy group, took the group through a lively account of their work to influence the legislature over the last two sessions, with humor and a wonderful sense of optimism in spite of temporary setbacks. Their organization, planning, and energy were an inspiration.

Hands-on conversations after lunch covered planning events, seeking out partners, articulating those partnerships, and developing attention-grabbing publicity. It was a fast-paced and high-spirited day with lots of thought-provoking ideas. Kate Cruikshank and Ann Heath joined LWVIN board members Judy Granbois and Linda Shanks as the LWVBMC contingent.



Ann Heath and Judy Granbois from LWVB-MC, and Pam Raider from Brown County at Presidents' Day February 20 at WFYI in Indy.

LWVBMC IN THE FOURTH OF JULY PARADE?

At its January meeting, the board committed to an LWVBMC presence in the July 4th parade as part of the contingent around the “corporate octopus” sponsored by Reverse Citizens United. However, Linda Harl has indicated an interest in our having an independent presence as well. According to the parade organizers, we could request to be either before or after the corporate octopus so that our



numbers would have more visual impact (presumably with our new T-shirts!), thus allowing us to both support Reverse Citizens United and have a separate League presence.

If you are interested in working on the possibility of a separate League entry, please contact Linda Harl at lharl@indiana.edu.

NATIONAL WOMEN’S HISTORY MUSEUM – Doris Wittenburg

If you have not yet visited the National Women’s History Museum website, <https://www.nwhm.org/>, you should. You will be delighted with what you find there, particularly in this month of celebration of Women’s History.

Quoting from the website, “The National Women’s History Museum (NWHM), founded in 1996, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit educational institution dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and celebrating the diverse historic contributions of women, and integrating this rich heritage fully into our nation's history. Although women constitute a majority of the population, their lives, achievements, and contributions are underrepresented in museums. Recognition of the achievements made by American women will promote a better understanding of our history and culture for all who visit Washington, D.C. In 1999, *The President’s Commission on the Celebration of Women in American History* called for a women’s history museum in Washington, DC, and specifically cited the NWHM in that role. From its founding, NWHM has worked hard towards obtaining a permanent museum site in the nation’s capital on or near the National Mall. Such prestigious space requires Congressional approval. [Click here](#) to learn about the latest effort to secure a permanent home.”

It was recently brought to my attention that there is a new online exhibit on the NWHM site that might be of interest to you since Black History Month was just celebrated. Publicity for the exhibit states: “As far back as the 19th century, African American women fought for civil rights. They resisted slavery. They spoke out against racism. They established women's clubs to improve conditions for African Americans. Celebrate the contributions of African Americans to the United States by visiting the National Women’s History Museum [new online exhibit](#), “*Standing Up for Change: African American Women and the Civil Rights Movement.*” It spotlights the rich and vibrant voice of black women leaders in the movement and highlights their significant role and contributions. Learn more about the role of women as the backbone to several successful campaigns and grassroots organizing during the 50s and 60s. The exhibit spotlights black women and their leadership in the efforts to dismantle Jim Crow laws and challenge injustice. Learn about the trailblazing work of Sojourner Truth in the early 19th Century that inspired women like Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune. Get to know lesser known figures like Daisy Bates and Ruby Hurley and how their work benefited the Civil Rights Movement, at a time when many women did not hold positions in the dominant civil rights organizations.

League Leadership:

President: Kate Cruikshank (cruiksha@indiana.com) (H) 812-339-6096 (W) 812-856-4061

Vice President: Nancy Brinegar (btnancy@bluemarble.net)

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

Treasurer: Carol Walter (carol.walter@sbcglobal.net)

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

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

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

Directors:

Rachel Guglielmo

Ann Heath

George Hegeman

Albrecht Holschuh

Peter Kaczmarczyk

Bill Milroy

Doris Wittenburg

Program Committee:

Diane Legomsky, chair (diane.legomsky@gmail.com)

Velma Davis (cuchi2009@att.net)

Ann Heath (awheath504@comcast.net)

Kate Cruikshank (cruiksha@indiana.edu)

Membership Committee:

Ann Heath, chair (awheath504@comcast.net)

George Hegeman (hegemang@indiana.edu)

Carol Walter (carolwalter@sbcglobal.net)

Voter Service Committee:

Diane Legomsky, chair (diane.legomsky@gmail.com)

Kathy Byers (kvbyers@indiana.edu)

Kate Cruikshank (cruiksha@indiana.edu)

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)

Helen Hollingsworth (hllhollin59@att.net)

Peter Kaczmarczyk (ghouse2@yahoo.com)

Diane Legomsky (diane.legomsky@gmail.com)

Lou Malcomb (malcomb@indiana.edu)

Bill Milroy (milroy41.bm@gmail.com)

Linda Shanks (lshanks61@gmail.com)

Laura Trout (ltrout@homefinder.org)