

League of Women Voters Bloomington – Monroe County

League Letter – November 2017



Calendar

- November 2** MCCSC Community Conversation, MCCSC Co-Lab, 553 Miller Dr., 5:30–7:00 pm
- November 12** Member meeting, MCPL Room 2A, 2:00–3:30 pm
- November 13** Board meeting, Bell Trace Private Dining Room, 7:00 pm
- November 14** Redistricting Committee meeting, 2608 W. Windermere Woods Dr., 7:00 pm
- November 15** Voter registration training, Election Central, 401 W. 7th St., 3:30–5:00 pm
- November 17** Voter registration training, Election Central, 401 W. 7th St., 3:30–5:00 pm
- November 20** Presentation by VoteSmart’s Richard Kimball, MCPL Auditorium, 7:00 pm
- December 10** Member meeting, MCPL Room 1C, 2:00–3:30 pm
- December 11** Board meeting, Bell Trace Private Dining Room, 7:00 pm

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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.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER – Kate Cruikshank



Although the 2018 general election is a year away, we have our work cut out for us to get ready for it. The LWVIN has laid out its goals for the year, which include defending and enhancing voter rights and increasing voter turnout, but where do we start?

Clearly, continuing the pressure for redistricting is a priority, and supporting the upcoming legislation to allow Election Day registration and to open up absentee voting by mail to everyone will be important. (See Vickie Dacey's article in League Updates.) Voter registration will also continue to be a priority, one that is shared by an increasing number of organizations that plan to mount voter registration drives. We will need help from our members who are in these other organizations to coordinate efforts and extend our coverage as far as possible.

We also have the beginnings of a project to support voter registration for people who do not have a photo ID and lack the documents to acquire one, upon which we could build. A recent investigative report on voter suppression in Wisconsin in the 2016 election makes clear how important such a project can be and also points to efforts by new organizations such as Spread the Vote and Let America Vote to help individuals whose voting rights are being blocked by voter ID laws. Presumably there is a role for the League of Women Voters in this effort. See the [Mother Jones website](#) for the report.

Then there is the whole question of how we help disseminate accurate information on candidates so that voters have the information they need. We began that conversation at our September member meeting and will continue at our member meeting on November 12. This is a question that can use everyone's ideas, so I hope to see you there.

***From the Board:** Because of health issues, Diane Legomsky has resigned as secretary. However, she has graciously accepted a director position, effective until the 2018 annual meeting. Judy Granbois has been appointed secretary, also effective until the next annual meeting. Thank you, Diane, for your excellent service to the League, and thanks also to Judy for stepping forward!*

League Updates

KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH THE LEAGUE – Ann Heath



If you're a Facebook user, be sure to check out the Facebook pages for both [our League](#) and the [Indiana League](#). The League of Women Voters of Indiana releases new information almost daily on their Facebook account, and our site is also updated frequently. To keep up with new information, "follow" these sites. To help spread the word about League activities, "like" and "share" new posts as they come up.

STATE COMMITTEE MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS – Vickie Dacey

On October 19, three members of our Bloomington LWV Redistricting Committee attended the Interim Committee on Elections meeting in Indianapolis. Supporters of redistricting reform attended with the hope that the committee would make a recommendation on redistricting reform. At the meeting, the committee chair reported the group's recommendations before members voted to adopt the final report. The committee made two recommendations:

- Encourage same-day voter registration
- Expand voting by mail-in ballot

During the next legislative session, Senator Greg Walker (R-Columbus) plans to introduce legislation that would allow Hoosiers to mail in ballots without requiring a reason, while Representative Clyde Kersey (D-43rd District) will propose a bill in the House. Both efforts, although not specifically addressing redistricting reform, are expected to impact voter participation if approved.

2018 LEGISLATIVE UPDATES – Kate Cruikshank

Our legislative updates for the 2018 legislative session will be January 6, February 3, and March 3 (first Saturdays of the month). As in the past, they will be in the City Council chambers from 9:30 to 11:00 am and will be taped by CATS. This is a short legislative session, required by law to end by March 14.

COUNTERING VOTER SUPPRESSION IN INDIANA – Kate Cruikshank

The prospect of voter suppression was a major fear when President Trump created his Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, which continues to be far less than transparent as to both its goals and processes. Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach has promoted use of the Kansas Crosscheck program, which identifies people with the same names and birthdates who have registered to vote in different states, on the assumption that they could be double-voting. While tracking down and correcting the enormous number of “false positives” that the program can generate can be done at the county level, it places a huge burden on local officials that is very likely to be totally unnecessary, but that could result in voters being illegally barred from voting through bureaucratic snarls. For those of us in Indiana, it may be encouraging to know that our secretary of state, Connie Lawson, who is a member of the commission, has initiated the use of software to handle those “false positives.” For details, see the [Mother Jones website](#).

Reports on Program

CONSTITUTION 101 – Kate Cruikshank

Our Constitution 101 course, cosponsored with the Monroe County Public Library, has completed its first four sessions, dispelling notions and raising questions about exactly how our government is

supposed to work. For some of us, the realization that our founding documents were creating what would always be a work-in-progress was a bit of a surprise. Instructor Robert Leming has drawn in his colleague, Drew Horvath, a We the People social studies teacher at Lawrence Central High School in Indianapolis, for two rousing sessions on due process and the balance (or not) of state and federal powers. With two sessions to go, we're learning a lot. Thanks go to Bert Rudman for the financial support that has made this experience possible.

EFFORTS WITH SCHOOL BOARD CONTINUE – Deborah Myerson



Bloomington South High School

Is democracy dead? No, but it is messy! At the September 26 meeting of the Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) school board, nine members of the community spoke during the public comment period in favor of appointing a review committee to update the 23-year-old school board districts. However, the board did not appoint a committee at this meeting. Instead, members agreed to discuss the topic at the October 19 school board work session.

At the work session, board members saw a presentation on the history of MCCSC school board districts and engaged in a long debate on the question. (This is worth watching on CATS (catstv.net) to fully appreciate.) However, the board did not appoint a committee at this meeting. Instead, board members agreed to convene a Community Conversation on Thursday, November 2, from 5:30 to 7:00 pm at the MCCSC Co-Lab, 553 Miller Dr.

The current school board districts were last updated in 1994. The populations in each district now have vast disparities—some have upwards of 22,000 residents, while others have 12,000 or less. Attracting candidates has been increasingly difficult. In the last decade, eight out of sixteen school board elections have gone uncontested.

Please come and contribute a lively conversation to continue the discussion about why MCCSC needs to appoint a committee to revise the school board districts. This effort was initiated by the Community Committee for Educational Equity (CCEE), an informal coalition of parents, educators, and residents of Monroe County. The committee members recognize the importance of responsible governance for our public schools. The CCEE seeks to maintain a robust public school system that provides a high-quality education with breadth and depth of opportunity to all students, regardless of race or family income.



REDISTRICTING HOUSE PARTIES MOVE FORWARD – Vickie Dacey

Our Redistricting Reform Committee continues to build its resources and visibility. At the October 3 meeting, President Kate Cruikshank gave an interactive presentation on redistricting reform. The presentation provided background information on the topic, showed different ways in which district

lines can be drawn to favor one political party over another, and detailed the negative effects of gerrymandering.

The House Party Task Force of the Redistricting Committee is close to finalizing a timeline and materials for the Redistricting House Party initiative. The primary goal of this initiative is to increase awareness, support, and advocacy for redistricting reform in Indiana.

League members are being invited to sign up to “host” or become “presenters” for house parties. Churches, civic groups, and other organizations will be invited to host parties or sponsor meetings on redistricting reform as the initiative gains momentum in 2018.

The Redistricting Committee will meet on November 14 at 7:00 pm. Any League member interested in being a host or presenter for the redistricting reform house parties is encouraged to attend this meeting.



Vicki Polansky and Albrecht Holschuh are ready for interested bystanders and house party volunteers at the Bloomington Farmers Market.

Civic Education

MONROE COUNTY YOUTH COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP – Elaine Gaul

Many thanks to the League members who participated in the October 11 orientation meeting for the Monroe County Youth Council students. Nine of our 10 student volunteers were able to be there that night. We introduced ourselves, and League members (Kate, Allison, Diedre, Albrecht, and Elaine) told why we had joined the League and how long we'd been members, while the students said what their interests were and why they'd chosen to volunteer for the LWV. Kate then gave a very nice synopsis of League basics and of why we should all pay heed to our local government. Diedre, Albrecht, and Elaine answered questions about the service options—Observer Corps and voter registration—and we wound up with seven of our volunteers choosing to do both!

Our next step is to prepare the students for their service work. Diedre has arranged Observer Corps orientation for the students on November 7 and 10. Students will meet with experienced Observers and have a chance to ask questions, hear anecdotes, and get advice from the folks who know. At the end of the session, the students will select which board or commission they want to cover so they can start reporting on their meetings in December.

Students will be participating in voter registration training on November 15 and 17 (see article on training later in this newsletter). Once they are trained, Elaine will coordinate with the students as they select venues and organize voter registration drives. We have a wonderfully enthusiastic group of young people, and we're hopeful that they'll continue to be involved with us for years to come.

Voter Services

VOTE SMART PRESENTATION NOVEMBER 20 – Kate Cruikshank



Just a reminder that on November 20, Vote Smart's president, Richard Kimball, will be giving the only Indiana presentation on a Midwest tour at the Monroe County Public Library auditorium at 7:00 pm. If you aren't familiar with

Vote Smart, check it out at www.votesmart.org. Kimball will be introducing a new tool called *On Point*, which will enable citizens to take any major issue facing Congress and instantly access over their cell phones any of the votes, public remarks, issue positions, relevant biographical background, campaign contributions, and even special interest ratings their representatives have made related to that issue. Kimball's presentation is part of our ongoing collaboration with MCPL.

MORE VOTER REGISTRATION TRAINING COMING – Elaine Gaul

Voter registration efforts are already underway—the Latin Club at Bloomington North managed to register 50 new voters last week! If you were not able to take the voter registration training in July, here are two more chances. Elaine Gaul is working with Karen Wheeler of Election Central to offer sessions from 3:30 to 5:00 pm on Wednesday, November 15, and Friday, November 17, at 401 W. 7th St. Suite 100.

If you want to be current on forms, procedures, and information in general and can attend one of the November sessions, please contact Elaine Gaul (egaul@indiana.edu; 812-339-9615). The deadline for sign-up is Sunday, November 12. Seating is limited to 15 for each session, so please reserve your spot. Election season will be upon us before we know it!

Membership

MEMBER MARY GAJEWSKI REACHES 50-YEAR MARK – Ann Heath

We have just confirmed another 50-year member of the Bloomington League—Mary Gajewski. At present, Mary and her husband are in Arizona, busy cleaning up their house there after a pipe broke in their absence. Congratulations and many thanks to Mary for 50 years of League membership!

As you may know, the LWVUS has not kept accurate records of past membership. If you think you may be a 50-year member, please contact Ann Heath (812-327-9637) with details.

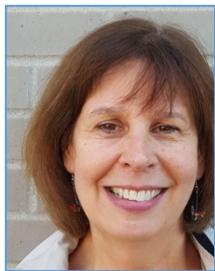
By the way, if you have not yet renewed your membership, you can download a membership form from the [BMCLWV website](#). Not only are you important to us as a member, but your membership dues help keep us going!

SURVEY COMING YOUR WAY! – Vickie Dacey

The Membership and Communications committees have developed a survey which will be sent to our entire League membership in November. The goals of the survey are to learn ways to be more responsive to members' interests and to use this information to plan for 2018. Please help us become an even more effective League by completing the survey as soon as it comes to your email inbox. The survey is quick and easy and should take less than 5 minutes to complete! If you are not on email, you will be contacted by phone.

In addition to the survey, we are planning a series of small-group “conversations” in November and December. These conversations will be about different aspects of your League experience. Each meeting will last for 90 minutes and will include about 8 to 10 participants. Each group will consist of both new and experienced members. Please watch for an invitation with several date/time options, then sign up for the option that best suits your schedule. We hope to meet and talk to everyone!

MEET A MEMBER: VICKI POLANSKY – Ann Heath



Vicki Polansky became aware of the problems involved in obtaining voter ID a few years ago, when an elderly aunt lost her driver's license and found it impossible to get copies of documents needed to replace it. Vicki discussed her concern about problems with voter ID with a number of people, and someone suggested that she contact the League. At that time, Vicki knew almost nothing about the League, but had the impression that it was probably a group of “blue-haired women.” However, when a couple more people suggested she contact the League, she did—and found out about the work the LWV does to protect voter rights. Her concern for protection of voter rights and also the need for nonpartisan redistricting led Vicki to join the League early in 2017.

In her first few months of membership, Vicki asked whether our League had a booth at the Monroe County Fair. (We hadn't for the past several years.) Vicki is a great fan of the fair—with two sons 10 years apart, she has attended for many years. She and her younger son (now in middle school) particularly enjoy taking friends from other countries to the fair to introduce them to this unique American experience. Thus, Vicki volunteered to organize the League's fair participation. As she pointed out, the fair offers us the opportunity to reach out to a group of people we might not otherwise interact with. The booth at the fair was a great success: over 500 balloons with LWV tags floated among fairgoers; more than 160 children entered the raffle for the Gerry, the stuffed salamander; pages of signatures were collected on redistricting petitions. Will we go to the fair again next year? YES!

Following the fair, Vicki has continued her involvement in the effort for nonpartisan redistricting as a member of that task force. She has staffed the League booth at the Farmers Market on several weekends this summer and fall.

Vicki earned a PhD in Russian literature and is the managing editor of Slavica Publishers, a not-for-profit IU entity that publishes journals and books on the language and literature of former Soviet-

bloc countries. Vicki is active in events of her political party and enjoys gardening (with an emphasis on native species) and reading.

And now that Vicki knows more about the League, she reports that she is “constantly inspired and impressed by League members—the amount of talent, intelligence, and commitment is amazing.”

Observer Reports

REPORT ON COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION – Jim Faber

The Monroe County Plan Commission had very few items to cover in their October meeting. One of interest was the Walker Rezone from Forest Reserve (FR) to Suburban Residential (SR). This is a property on the north shore of Lake Lemon on East Spillway Rd. A garage was located half under a high power transmission line and half on private property. The decision was to move the garage entirely to the private property and update the septic system.

On an aside, there were no projects in October for the Drainage Board and they did not meet. The Stormwater Management Board did not have a meeting in September or October. No reason was given for the cancellations.

REPORT ON CITY PLAN COMMISSION – Joyce Pace

A defined procedure is in place at the City Plan Commission meetings for the hearing of petitions. Generally, the petitioner and the Planning Department staff work together in the preliminary stage. At the meeting, a staff member presents the petition in detail. The petitioner provides additional comments and clarification. Plan Commission members thoroughly review and discuss the details and ramifications of the petition. Members of the public are invited to give input (5 minute time limit). Then, it’s back to the Plan Commission, with a motion to approve, deny, or continue, plus further comments, and the vote.

Three of the five agenda items presented at the October 2 City Plan Commission meeting were petitions for four-story buildings in downtown Bloomington. The meeting lasted approximately 4½ hours.

The H.M. Mac Development petition for a four-story building was moved to first on the agenda. The property location is 321-331 S. Walnut (between the bus station and Project School). The Director of Planning and Transportation, Terri Porter, stepped up to the podium and stated she would be presenting it. She advised the Plan Commission to deny the petition and base it on a decision to not permit any additional student housing in downtown Bloomington. This came as a surprise to the petitioner and to the PC members. After discussion, they voted for continuance to a second meeting.

The usual procedure was followed for the other agenda items. Approval was given to the Mara Jade Holdings project (SW corner of E. Third and S. Grant streets). A four-story building containing 35 studio units, 18 parking spaces, and commercial space will replace the one-story office building.

The next petition was approved to permit the development of the Yellow Cab property (south side of W. Sixth St. between Morton St. and College Ave.). They would retain the existing two-story building and build an additional two stories on top while also developing a four-story addition on the existing parking lot.

Also approved was a petition from Milestone Ventures for development of property for a three-story multifamily building and reuse of an historic church (SW corner of Third and Walker streets) for people experiencing homelessness. This would follow in the pattern of Crawford House.

The last petition was approved. It was an amendment to the city's Unified Development Ordinance to permit limited numbers of Accessory Dwelling Units within single-family zoning districts.

REPORT ON THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS – Diedre Todd

At the October 24 meeting, the Board of Park Commissioners approved an access license agreement with IU Health Bloomington. IU Health will improve a swale north of the Ferguson dog park. This swale is part of the Griffy Lake watershed. They are doing this because the new IU Health hospital will affect the watershed. They will pay for all improvements and maintain it for five years.

The Board also approved the South Central Indiana Housing Opportunities bid for a two-building, low-income housing project. The land is at 1901 S. Rogers St. abutting Switchyard Park. The city is drafting a 99-year, \$1 dollar ground lease for the property. The Bloomington Housing Authority (part of South Central Indiana Housing Opportunities) will be in charge of demolition, building, and management of the complex.

In other actions, the board approved a number of contracts for work to be completed as well as partnerships with several clubs and associations. The board also approved the sale of spirits by Cardinal Spirits at the Holiday Market. This is sale by the bottle and not to be consumed on site. In addition, there was a review of the 2018 price schedule, which will be voted on at the November meeting, and a report on this summer's Kid City.

LEAGUE LEADERSHIP:

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

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

Secretary: Judy Granbois (jgranboi@indiana.edu)

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 Birch (annfbirch@gmail.com)

Ann Heath (awheath504@comcast.net)

George Hegeman (hegemang@indiana.edu)

Diane Legomsky (diane.legomsky@gmail.com)

Doris Wittenburg (dwittenb@indiana.edu)