

LEAGUE BASICS

MISSION OF THE LEAGUE

- **To encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government.** The League is a nonpartisan organization that neither supports nor opposes any political party or candidate for public office (even when the office is unaffiliated with a political party, e.g., school board). We are however, political, because we work to affect the outcome of legislation and policy. Our nonpartisan status leads us to support policies and legislation that are for the general good. While we may support legislation or policies that are preferred by a particular party, our support is the result of study and discussion that has incorporated all points of view.

HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE

- **LWVUS** founded February 14, 1920, 6 months before ratification of the 19th Amendment.
- Purpose: to be a means of teaching the newly enfranchised women the mechanics of registering and voting; about the process of nomination and election procedures; about our form of government.
- They thought the work might be accomplished in 5 years!
- Through the years, the League has evolved from an organization concerned with *women's needs* and training *women* voters to one concerned with *the nation's needs* and to *training and informing all voters*.
- Men were admitted as members, beginning in 1973.

- **LWVIN** also organized in 1920, when 112 local chapters of the Indiana Franchise League folded into the LWVUS. Most of those local chapters disbanded or reorganized. There are now 20 local Leagues in Indiana, including Bloomington – Monroe County.

- **LWVBMC** began as the Women's Franchise League in Bloomington in 1913. When the LWV was formed, The Bloomington Franchise League choose to join. Over the years, the League in Bloomington-Monroe County has been involved in educating the public, and in specific efforts, such as passage of an ordinance on rat control (1940s); pasteurization of milk (1940s); school consolidation (1950s); development of Lake Monroe (1950s); establishment of Utilities Service Board (1960s); environmental issues (e.g., Hoosier National Forest and PCBs in drinking water) (1970s). In the 1960s, the League established the Observer Corps, and the 1990s, published *A Study of Young At-Risk Children in Monroe County, IN*. Today we may be best known for *Keys to the Candidates, Governmental Officials List* currently transitioning to online, Legislative Updates, and our work in voter registration and education (most recently, Kate Cruikshank's talks on monitoring legislation as it passes through the Indiana General Assembly).

- LWVBMC currently has about 125 members, 40+ of whom are new this year.

STRUCTURE OF THE LEAGUE

- When you join a local League, you automatically become a member of the League at all three levels: local, state, and national.
- At each level, the League has a board that conducts the business of the League between annual meetings (at a local level) or between biennial conventions (state and national).
- A part of dues collected locally is sent to LWVIN and LWVUS, who assess a "PMP" (per-member payment); the remainder is used locally. The PMPs are used for the general purposes of the League at

state and national levels – may include organizational things like membership roster; collecting and disseminating information of common interest to all local Leagues and lobbying.

LEAGUE POSITIONS

- **POSITIONS** are stands on public policy that become the basis for actions we take.
- The League has a process of developing the positions. At each level, a topic for study is proposed to the Annual Meeting/Convention and voted upon by the members attending. The expectation is that people proposing a study will form a nucleus of people to work on it – particularly important at the local level. A study committee is formed to gather information and draft questions on which decisions should be made. The study materials and questions to be considered are then presented to the membership.
- The membership participates in reading recommended materials, discussion of the questions, and then reaches conclusions, through a process known as “**consensus**.” In this process, discussion is continued until a general agreement (not necessarily unanimous) is reached. (The process of consensus has always been the “League way” of decision making. It may have its roots in the fact that many of the prominent suffragists were Quakers, and consensus is the method used by Friends to reach agreement.) When the decision is reported, any concerns differing from the consensus are noted.
- The study committee and the board review the reports of member discussion and prepare a position statement, which is adopted by the board. Position statements are stated in general terms so that subsequent boards can use them as a guide for action in particular circumstances.
- At the state and national levels, another procedure is used when one part of the League has completed a study and reached consensus, and wants other Leagues to accept the same position. In this case, the convention adopts a topic for **concurrence**. This is followed by board review of the statement, a study committee, and member discussion that produces a decision to agree or disagree. These results are sent to the board, who decide if it can be adopted as a position.

HOW ARE LEAGUE POSITIONS USED?

- Any action - steps taken to influence public policy to make it consistent with League positions at all levels - (this could include public statement, participation in an event, support of issue must be based on a League position.
- There is a hierarchy of League positions (US, IN, B-MC) – in practice, B-MC can take action based on its own positions, as well as those of US and IN; however, LWVUS or LWVIN cannot take action based on a position of B-MC.
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- **VERY IMPORTANT TO NOTE: The only person who can make a public statement on behalf of the League at whatever level is the President at that level. Actions taken on behalf of the League must be approved by the Board at that level.**
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- Individuals are encouraged to act, AS INDIVIDUALS, on issues about which they have interest or concerns. Can a League member call an elected representative, write a letter to the editor, participate in a public demonstration, etc., and urge certain actions – by all means! However, the League member should not identify him/herself as a League member in doing so!
- There are limitations to certain aspects of public participation on some issues for such critical board positions such as the President and Voter Service Chair, who become publicly known as League representatives.

- Reminder: League positions are on policy issues – they can never be used in opposition to a particular candidate, elected representative, or party.

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT “PROGRAM”?

- PROGRAM at each level of the League indicates the public policy issues chosen for study and/or action by members during the next year (or two years, for LWVUS and LWVIN).

WHAT IS THE TAX STATUS OF THE LEAGUE?

- For many years, the League has been a 501c4 organization, which means that we are a non-profit organization that is not tax-deductible, for dues or for general contributions.
- A corollary organization, the LWV Education Fund has existed for virtually every League. This organization is 501c3, and contributions have been tax-deductible.
- This had to do with the percentage of funds that were allocated for lobbying. However, this amount is far below the threshold, so it is no longer necessary to have two organizations.
- The League at all levels is folding the two organizations together. Eventually, dues and all contributions will be tax deductible.

WHAT ARE THE MOST NOTABLE CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE LEAGUE IN BLOOMINGTON?

(Which is to say: How to be involved)

- Voter Education
 - Candidate Forums before general elections – involves invitations to all candidates, location arrangements, set up on site; volunteer timers and runners,
 - Keys to the Candidates - published before every general election, in conjunction with the H-T. People needed to contact all candidates (procedure already exists), collect and organize responses, proofread final format.
 - Public speakers (in last couple of years) “How the Legislature Really Works”; How to monitor Legislation in the General Assembly; What do people mean when they talk about community planning?;
 - Legislative Updates – invitation of all elected legislators; room set-up on day; timers, greeters
 - Civic Education – series of classes planned for fall – help will be needed
 - Government Officials List – now going online, so that it can be kept up to date. Requires people with good research and computer skills.
- Legislative Updates – updates about the progress of proposed legislation are sent to members, who are encouraged to advocate to their elected representatives
- Redistricting efforts – over for the immediate moment. Strategy and participation are needed going forward.
- Observer Corps –silent monitoring - members attend meetings of local governmental bodies and report back to the board about issues that are relevant to the League, initiatives that should be monitored, etc. An observer identifies him/herself as a member of the League, but does not participate in the meeting in any way. This is a great way to get to know more about local government.
- Voter Registration – At certain times of the year, we go where the people are and register them to vote. In the past several years, we have registered voters at sites such as Farmers Market, School Open Houses, the MCPL (in the pre-Be a Voter days), high school civics classes, and last fall for the first

time at Kroger East. We are currently evaluating the most effective ways and places for conducting registration. Registrars work in pairs, so people new to the process are always welcome.

- New initiative to help people get documents to register; help getting to polls
- Social Media – web site, Facebook – help needed with maintenance
- Monitoring Environmental Concerns
- Monitoring Health Care
- Book study groups?
- Study groups for topics of interest?
- Membership
 - Update of membership book
 - Welcome committee

OTHER THINGS TO KNOW:

WEBSITES:

Bloomington-Monroe County: <http://bmclwv.org>

LWV Indiana: <http://www.lwvin.org>

LWVUS: <http://lwv.org>

LOCAL LEADERSHIP

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

Vice President: Albrecht Holschuh

Secretary: Diane Legomsky

Treasurer: Carol McGregor

Directors:

Ann Heath

George Hegeman

Peter Kaczmarczyk

Doris Wittenburg

Membership Chair: Ann Heath

Observer Corps: Diedre Todd

Newsletter Editor: Doris Wittenburg