

VOTER

League of Women Voters of
Indiana County, Pennsylvania
www.palwv.org/indiana



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CONSENSUS

Study—>Discussion—>Member agreement —>Policy position

Consensus is the method that the League of Women Voters (on all of its levels—local, state and national) uses to determine what its policy positions will be. It is a ground up process that is unique today and was unusual when the League started.

As the League does it, consensus is a structured process used to draw out the decisions of a group without taking an actual vote. Local Leagues are central to this method. When the League wants to establish a new position on a public policy issue, local Leagues form committees that study the topic, pro and con. For a national or state issue, the League at these levels does some of the research and provides background material. Local Leagues are free to do their own research as well.

Local Leagues then have consensus meetings at which the committee presents the background, pro and con, and the consensus

questions. There is a discussion leader, whose job it is to bring everyone into the discussion of the questions, and a recorder, who takes notes on the discussion and records the sense of the group. At the end of the meeting or on a schedule determined by the discussion leader, the recorder reads back the conclusions of the group. The group will either agree or disagree that that was what was decided. If it disagrees, the process starts over until the group agrees that consensus has been reached.

The results of the consensus meeting are sent to the State LWV League, in this case, and reports are tallied. The results form the State position on that issue.

MARCELLUS SHALE CONSENSUS

February 13, 2010 Fire Mountain 8:30 a.m.

Consensus questions are the focus for the February 13 meeting at Fire Mountain. Plan to be eating by 8:30. The presentation and discussion start at 8:45.

Twenty minutes will be spent on the issues covered in Study Guides II, III, IV, and V. The guides may be reviewed at www.lwvpa.org. Click on the Marcellus Shale map.

Presenters will be limited to a five-minute summary. Discussion of the questions will be 15 minutes per guide. At the end, the Recorder will present what she has noted as consensus. There will be time for more discussion at that point.

Marcellus Shale natural gas extraction is an issue that goes beyond Indiana County's borders.

The extraction affects land, water, and air. The extraction involves jobs, health, and both direct and indirect revenue streams for the state. These are issues that will be handled by the legislature and the governor's office. Once the League has positions, it can lobby for those positions.

League positions are grass roots positions, arrived at after study. The Indiana County LWV has studied issues surrounding Marcellus Shale natural gas extraction for two years, lobbied the State Convention to make the study a State Study, wrote the study documents, and is now ready to have consensus. Consensus results in positions. Members through the consensus process create positions. Come to Fire Mountain and participate.

League Launches 2010 Survey on Democracy

We urge you to participate in a national survey the League of Women Voters of the United States is taking. This is an online survey about national public policy issues and will be used to help the national League prioritize their goals.

To take the 2010 League Survey on Democracy, please go to:

<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14694>

and click on "Take Our Survey". (we will also be emailing this link to our members) It is short and takes only a few minutes to complete.

Don't miss this opportunity to make your voice heard—complete the survey today.

Legislative Meetings

Every year Local League of Women Voters Chapters hold interviews with their State legislators. Every League member is invited to attend these interviews. The purpose of the Legislative Interviews is to learn where legislators stand on specific issues, to get a reading on what legislation might be introduced in the new session, to plan a seed of interest on an issue that they may not have considered or be familiar with and to help Leagues build a relationship with their legislators.

We will be holding our interviews on the following dates:

Rep. Dave Reed	Friday	Feb. 5, 2010	10:00 a.m.	Aging Services
Rep. Jeff Pyle	Friday	Feb. 26 2010	2:00 p.m.	Senior Center
Sen. Don White	Friday	Mar. 5, 2010	9:00 a.m.	Eat 'n Park

We hope you can join us for one or more of these interviews!

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania sends questions relating to state issues to their local leagues along with background information. This year there are three questions:

1. This year's budge was balanced in large part by legislative approval of two very controversial public policy issues—expanding casino gambling to include table games and leasing more state lands for extraction of natural gas. What would you do to ensure that the next budge is adopted on time and the legislature will not be pressured to make serious public policy decisions that should be made independently of budgetary considerations?
2. "The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all people." PA Constitution. Please provide your thoughts on how this constitutional mandate should guide legislative decision making on environmental issues.
3. What reforms, if any, would you propose to make the Legislature operate more efficiently?

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County will have a booth at the Family Fun Fest on March 20. The theme this year is Going Green for Spring. We need volunteers to man our booth. If you are particularly interested in children's issues, this is a good way to get involved. To volunteer, contact Pepita Jimenez-Jacobs at pepitajimenezjacobs3@gmail.com. We will have further details in the March Voter issue.

INDIANA AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT PONDERES GRADE CONFIGURATIONS

According to testimony at a recent school board meeting many families with young children choose to buy homes in Indiana Borough because of the neighborhood schools. They like the small town ambiance where their children can walk to school and the school is the center of their community. Borough residents now fear they could lose either or both in-town schools as a result of current school board discussions about the need to renovate local schools to meet current educational needs.

The Indiana Area School District board is engaged in a District-Wide Facilities Study, A PA Department of education prerequisite for reimbursable construction projects. "The study provides a framework from which the district can determine a strategy best suited to meet the needs and goals of the district." Included in the study are analyses of each building's capacity, physical condition and construction options.

Although public meetings were well publicized there was very little community interest in the study until rumors began circulating about moving ninth grade into the senior high and closing one or both of the in-town elementary schools. Fewer than thirty people attended two public meetings in July 2009, and five people were at the August session, but large crowds

attended the two January school board meetings. At the January 18 meeting the district consultants presented several options for possible changes in grade configurations. If the ninth grade were to move to the high school the recently renovated junior high could easily accommodate grades 5 through 8, or 6 through 8, meaning the elementary schools would house grades K through 4 or K through 5.

A central issue for the school board is the cost of renovating four of the five district buildings. Horace Mann Elementary is over 100 years old, and was last renovated 25 years ago. Eisenhower and Ben Franklin have never had major renovations since they were built over 50 years ago. The senior high is in urgent need of a new roof. If the district were to do the interior renovation necessary to accommodate ninth grade at the same time as it repairs the roof the work would generate some reimbursement funding from the state.

For details of Options A, B and C, go to the Indiana Area School District web page and click on 'feasibility study'.

A FEW MORE MARCELLUS SHALE FACTS

As of December, 2009, 19 permits for Marcellus wells had been issued in Indiana County. Eight of the wells have been drilled.

In other counties:

Tioga County—300 permits issued, 114 wells drilled.

Bradford County—430 permits issued, 113 wells drilled.

Armstrong County—42 permits issued, 17 wells drilled.

In 2009, 4,249 drilling permits for non-Marcellus Shale wells were issued in Pennsylvania

Some interesting websites to look at:

www.marcellus-shale.us

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Vp1jFKM6ds (part 1)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mV0d0j9Sac (part 2)

<http://naturalgas.extension.psu.edu/>

www.depweb.state.pa.us/

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We're on the
Web!

www.palwv.org/indiana



CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

February 5—Legislative Interview with Rep. Dave Reed, 10:00 am, Aging Services, 1055 Oak Street, Large Meeting Room

February 8—Board Meeting—7:00 pm

February 13—Consensus meeting—Marcellus Shale Study. Fire Mountain Breakfast—8:30 am to begin eating

February 26—Legislative Interview with Rep. Jeff Pyle—2:00 pm, Aging Services, 1005 Oak Street, Cafeteria

March 5—Legislative Interview with Sen. Don White—9:00 am, Eat n' Park Restaurant

March 8—Board Meeting—7:00 pm

March 20—Family Fun Fest, Spring Fling, Indiana Mall

April 12—Board Meeting—7:00 pm

May 10—Board Meeting—7:00 pm

May 18—Primary Election

BOARD MEETINGS—held at Diane Duntley's home, 204 Greenview Court, Indiana —All Members Welcome

Know someone who may be interested in membership? Let President Sherene Hess know at 724-465-5056 and she will send a brochure & short letter describing LWVIC's activities.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to men and women of voting age.