

VOTER



A newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County, Pennsylvania

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LWVIC Board
of Directors,
2005-2006

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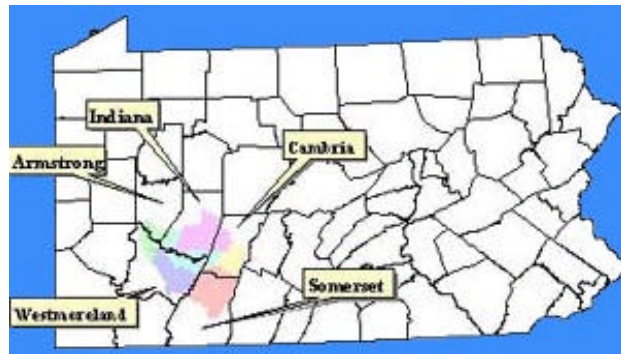
Aida Shotts

Next Board Meeting:
Monday, February 13
Noon
at Diane Duntley's,
204 Greenview Ct.
724-349-2718

All members and guests
are welcome!

JANUARY POTLUCK: STUDYING MERCURY LEVELS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT

JOSH LENSBOWER
MERCURY PROJECT COORDINATOR
KISKI-CONEMAUGH STREAM TEAM



The Stream Team, Kiski Basin Initiatives, Dr. Skip Kingston and Dr. Theo Towson of Duquesne University have joined together to **conduct a “benchmarking” study of Mercury in our water basin**. The study focuses on the Mercury content of riparian soils, macro-invertebrates, benthic sediments, Abandoned Mine Drainage discharges, water samples and fish. It will identify Mercury hotspots in our Basin.

Josh Lensbouer was born and raised in Somerset, PA and recently graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown with a BS in Chemistry and Biology.

*Please come to the annual
League potluck dinner*

Monday, January 23
At Oak Place
1055 Oak Street

**Bring your favorite
dish to share**

Gather at 5:30 p.m.

**Meal served promptly
At 6 p.m.**

Program at 7 p.m.

Bring guests & introduce
them to the League
and this pioneering study.

Contact Aida Shotts at
724-354-3482 or
shotts@yourinter.net

Always room for “last
minute” participants.

Indiana to Decide on Electronic Voting Machines

Indiana County is faced with a very difficult choice. Under the federal Help America Vote (HAVA) Act, all voting equipment used in federal elections must meet certain standards and every precinct must have at least one machine that can be used by voters with disabilities for the 2006 elections. All counties in PA are being encouraged to purchase HAVA compliant Direct Recording Electronic voting machines (DRE's). The optical scan system used by the county for the past 20 years does not permit independent voting by people with disabilities and does not warn voters that they have not cast all the votes they are entitled to cast. A federal grant is available to Indiana County that would help fund the cost of purchasing DRE's but required a commitment of intent signed by a December 31, 2005 deadline.



The commissioners requested public feedback on three touch-screen machines manufactured by Diebold, by ES & S, and by Advanced Voting Solutions. The counties are being pushed to make a decision immediately by the federal requirements to meet the deadline of the spring primary and by time-limited funding. However, the Commonwealth is still in the process of certifying systems and no certified system offers the capability of producing a voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT). There is also a lawsuit pending over a PA constitutional requirement that voters approve the use of an electronic voting system through referendum. The Federal U.S. General Accounting Office (at www/gao.gov/mew/ote.s/d05956.pdf) has reported that key activities needed to improve security and reliability of Electronic Voting Systems will not be completed for 2006 elections.

LWVIC president Sherene Hess prepared a letter to the commissioners sharing current information available to the League regarding the certification process. League members are very concerned also with the challenges of preparing election workers and citizens in learning to use an electronic system for the spring primary. The urgency of the state issues is fully outlined at www.pa.lwv.org. Information about the PA Dept of State implementation of HAVA and certification process is available at www.dos.state.pa.us. The League of Women Voters US position supporting voting systems that are secure, accurate, recountable and accessible (SARA) is described in "Safeguarding the Vote" under election reform at <http://www.lwv.org/> An article from the electronic perspective can be found at www.pcworld.com/news/article/0.aid.115608.00.asp.

Faith in the democratic process depends on the safeguarding our votes.

2006 Spring Election Calendar:

- Feb 14: First day to circulate & file nomination petitions
- March 7: Last day to circulate & file nomination petitions
- March 22: Last day for withdrawal by candidates who filed nomination petitions
- April 17: Last day to REGISTER to vote before primary
- May 9: Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot
- May 14: Last day for County Board of Elections to receive voted absentee Ballots.

May 16: GENERAL PRIMARY

Vote May 16th



Learning to Lobby and Campaign

"Ready to be Heard" is a two-day training event, set for Jan. 27 and 28, designed to teach women how to affect policy, interact with public officials and participate in public affairs. Professional lobbyists will be trainers and panelists. There will be sessions for for-profit and non-profit professionals, applied case studies, exercises and resource guides. The program will be held at Chatham College, home of the Pennsylvania Center for Women, Politics and Public Policy. The center is co-sponsoring the event with the Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania. Interested women may send an e-mail to kdeluca@chatham.edu or call 412-365-2986 for an application. Cost for the program is \$20. Candidate training is also available.

Great Decisions

Update your knowledge about controversial foreign policy issues by attending the Great Decisions Lecture/Discussion Series on Tuesday mornings from 9:30—11:30 a.m. in February/ March.

Expert speakers from IUP present on selected topics in the comfortable setting of St. Andrew's Village Community Room. A briefing book on issues and questions is prepared by the nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association (see www.fpa.org).

This year's eight topics include **UN Reform, U.S. and Iran, Energy, Brazil, China & India: Partners or Competitors, Human rights in the Age of Terrorism, Turkey, Pandemics and Security.**

For further information and registration brochure, contact Kyle Campbell at IUP Continuing Education (724-357-2227).



**Family Fun Fest
March 4 from 10-3
Indiana Mall**

Awareness & Diversity

LWVIC will offer activities from *Teaching Tolerance*

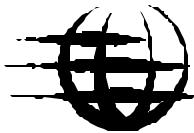
Call Pepita at (724) 463-3683 to sign up your help

EDUCATION COMMITTEE TO MEET JAN 25

The Education committee met the first week of December to determine a topic, or topics, of study for 2006. We received a generous grant from the local Phi Delta Kappa chapter when they closed their chapter last spring. The money can be used to continue the public information activities we have been co-sponsoring in recent years to encourage support for public education.

Several interesting and stimulating ideas were discussed, and we finally decided we needed to lift up programs in our schools which have a positive effect in the community. During our study of problems with No Child Left Behind in county schools we heard from several superintendents their concern that some important aspects of education were taking a back seat due to the required emphasis on reading, math and science. One of these areas is civic education: preparing our children to be informed and active citizens of their communities. This concern fits right in with LWV goals of educating voters and encouraging civic participation.

Before our next meeting we will be gathering information about civic education programs/projects in local schools. If you know of a particular program, or of a teacher who is doing a good job in encouraging good citizenship, please contact Diane Duntley or Nancy Fricke. Or better yet, come to our **next meeting on Wednesday, January 25, at 7:00 pm at Diane's home, 204 Greenview Ct.** (North 4th Street, turn right into Country Club Estates half-way up the hill from Bilo. Greenview Court is the first road at the top of the hill.)



**AIR QUALITY STUDY MEETING
TO BE SCHEDULED IN FEBRUARY .
CONTACT ANN REA FOR DETAILS**

**LWVIC Annual Garage Sale
Saturday, May 6, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
McClure Home
at 527 Shryock Ave, Indiana**



Now is the time to think about contributions. These may be from your house, a friend's house, from the house of a neighbor who is moving. If you are reluctant to give or to ask, think about how our budget can be funded. Wouldn't you rather help with the garage sale instead of asking for money or selling something that few people really want to buy from you?

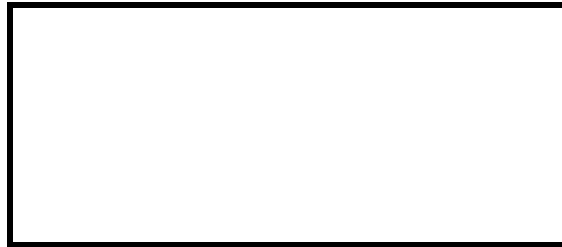
We sell large items as well as small. Furniture seems to sell. Christmas items do not.

Board members are wonderful about helping to set up and sell, but more help is needed. Think about donating some time during the first week in May (sorting items each morning). Call Susan McClure at 724-463-8252 or Olga Platt at 465-2073 to volunteer.

A newsletter of the League of
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We're on the Web!
[www.pa.lww.org/
indiana](http://www.pa.lww.org/indiana)



ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS

An annual League tradition is to arrange for a breakfast/luncheon meeting with our local state legislators each new legislative session. The LWVPA prepares questions for League members across the state to raise and to then return feedback to LWVPA on responses. The purpose of the interviews is for information gathering and maintaining contact and not to lobby for particular positions.

Questions, Background, and sign up sheets will be available at the potluck. Contact Aida Shotts or Sherene if interested in attending and if you would like to have background info sent to you by email.

2006 LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION:**
How can the PA legislature help districts meet requirements of Fed No Child Left Behind Act?
- 2. GOVERNMENT REFORM ISSUES:** How can the General Assembly improve its procedures; insuring that ALL legislators have an opportunity to participate in the process; support or oppose Lame Duck sessions?
- 3. CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION:** Do you support or oppose a Constitutional Convention (CC) and what issues should NOT be placed before a CC?
- 4. APPORTIONMENT AND REDISTRICTING:** How to achieve fairer representation?



Legislative Interviews Eat'n Park Restaurant

February 10 at 8:30 a.m.
Senator Don White

February 24 at 9:15 a.m.
Representative
Jeff Pyle

TBA
Representative
Dave Reed