

VOTER



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

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LWVIC Board of Directors, 2007-2008

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Next Board Meeting of LWVIC:

November 7, 2007
noon at

Diane Duntley's home
204 Greenview Ct.
724-349-2718

All members and guests
are welcome

IMMIGRATION AND THE ECONOMY

Yes, immigration affects the economy: The economy of the United States needs immigrants.

* **A Shrinking Indigenous Workforce.** Starting in the 1980's we tapped our last large supply of homegrown workers when women went into the workforce. Today, all growth in the work force will come from the foreign born and workers who are over 55.

* **Hour Glass Phenomenon.** Workers are needed for high skill jobs and low skill jobs. Nearly all native young people graduate from high school and are not encouraged to aspire to clean hotels or pick apples. At the high end, young people seek law degrees and MBA's instead of studying math and science. Employers seeking math and science graduates end up hiring foreign students.

* **Global Economy.** Immigrants who find jobs in an area go to the local library or internet café to e-mail relatives and friend who join them. The many Mexican immigrants who supply the labor at construction sites know where the job is because of the instant communication. A Pittsburgh executive was quoted in the paper saying that Pittsburgh

needed immigrants. Several weeks later, a van carrying illegal immigrants crashed on the Parkway.

* **Good Citizens.** Immigrants contribute to our economic success. They and their employers pay into the Social Security system. They pay sales taxes and invest in new businesses. Hispanic-owned businesses are growing at three times the national average. Asian-owned businesses are growing at twice the national average.

* **Numbers and Visas.** According to Doris Meissner, Senior Fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, between 1.5 and 1.8 million people are needed in the workforce. Under present law, 5,000 visas are available for workers needing Green Cards.

* **NAFTA.** The North American Free Trade Treaty allows products to flow across borders. But at the same time, the competition from these products has put Mexican farmers out of business. Those displaced farmers have ended up becoming illegal immigrants laboring in US farms. An immigration bill needs to address needs in the potential immigrants' home country.

More info on page 2.....

SOME ASPECTS OF CURRENT IMMIGRATION POLICY

Application for permanent immigrant status must fall under the following categories:

- **Immigration through relative** (58% of immigrants): The relative must prove he/she can support the relative at 125% above the mandated poverty line. Spouses and unmarried children of sponsoring US citizens do not have to wait for an available visa number. Other relatives must wait for a visa number. So although the annual quota for this category is 480,000, 600,000+ are granted visas. Visa numbers are issued using the following preferences:

- 0 First: Unmarried, adult sons and daughters of US citizens.
- 0 Second: Spouses of lawful permanent residents, their unmarried children.
- 0 Third: Married children of US citizens.
- 0 Fourth: Siblings of adult US citizens.

- **Immigration through Employment and Investment** (22% of immigrants:

The eligibility criteria for employment are:

- 0 Priority Workers: extraordinary ability in sciences, arts, education, business or athletics.
- 0 Professionals with advanced degrees or persons with exceptional ability in the sciences, arts or business; qualified alien physicians who will practice medicine in an underserved area of the US
- 0 Skilled or professional workers
- 0 Special Immigrants: Foreign national religious workers, and employees and

former employees of the US Government abroad.

- **Immigration through Investment:** Includes persons who create a new business or expand an existing business, and invest \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 and benefit the US economy by saving jobs or providing 10 or more jobs.
- **Diversity Lottery** (4% of immigrants): 55,000 immigrant visas are available per year by lottery to people who come from countries with low rates of immigration.
- **Refugee/asylees:** 13% of immigrants
- **Country Quotas:** Numbers of immigrants are limited to 7% of the total immigration of a given year. In effect, it is much harder to obtain a visa from Mexico, China, India and the Philippines because more people wish to emigrate from these countries.
- **Temporary Visitors** (students, tourists or guest workers): These persons should not be considered technically, but 25-40% of unauthorized aliens are temporary visitors who overstay their visas.

INTERESTING STATISTICS

Nationally, the foreign-born percentage has increased:

- ♦ From less than 5% in 1970 (the lowest point since before 1850, when records start)
- ♦ To 9% in 1990
- ♦ To 12% in 2000
- ♦ To 12-13% in 2005. Still a smaller percentage than early in 1900's.

Continued on page 3



IN AIR QUALITY NEWS....

IDLING REDUCTION REGULATION APPROVED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The Environmental Quality Board approved for public comment a new regulation aimed at cleaning up PA's air and saving trucking compa-

nies millions of dollars in diesel fuel. The regulation, developed by the Department of Environmental Protection after it was petitioned by the Clean Air Board of Central PA, would limit idling by long haul truckers, delivery trucks, school buses, transit buses and motor coaches.

The regulation must now be opened to public comment and be discussed in a public hearing before final consideration by the EQB. It must then be approved by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission and finally the state attorney general.

While there are some exemptions in the regulation, this is an important stride for PA's air quality and the health of children.

Interesting Statistics, Continued from page 2

Foreign-born by state:

- ◆ In 1990, foreign-born were concentrated in a few coastal states.
- ◆ Today, there are 14 states with populations of 12% foreign-born (not PA).
- ◆ Many states with <12% foreign-born, have experienced doubling or tripling of the percentage of foreign-born since 1990. Pennsylvania has tripled.

Covert border crossings. Originally this population was male and highly transient, often returning to their home country. Now, because it is more difficult to cross covertly, whole families cross the border and don't return. Consequently, there are more children born to these families in the US, creating the problem of deporting the parents of US citizens of minor age.

IN PUBLIC EDUCATION...

In 2006 the PA General Assembly made history by appropriating \$650,000 for a comprehensive "costing-out" study of the educational resources and associated costs of providing and ed-

Public Education, continued

ucation that is in line with the state academic standards. Pennsylvania relies more on local property taxes and less on state government for education funding than most other states. Because of that, there are wide disparities in education funding among the state's 501 school districts, based largely upon disparities in local affluence. Those disparities make it difficult to determine what it actually costs in PA to provide an "adequate" public education, as required by the state constitution.

The study has been completed and will be released November 14. There is a bill in the House that would create a 41-member Joint Legislative Commission on Public School Finance. It would try to shape a new funding structure for schools in accordance with the study's finding. This is not the first time the legislature has attempted to address school funding. House Resolution 42 of 2001 established a select committee "for the purpose of making recommendations for a new system of funding for public education . . ." The committee held hearings across the state and recommended a solution in the September 10, 2002, Report. No action was taken by the House.

Representatives from the board of education and study consultants will conduct six regional hearings to discuss local implications of the costing-out study. The SW PA regional meeting is December 6 in Homestead, PA. For more info. visit www.goodschoolspa.org/.

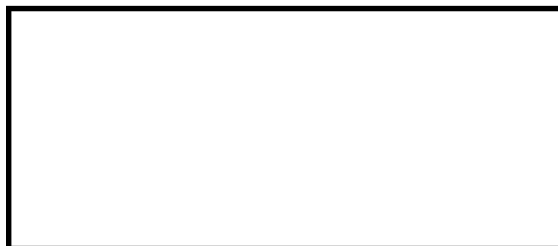
A newsletter of the
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We're on the
Web!

www.palwv.org/indiana



UPCOMING CALENDAR



Know someone who
may be interested in
membership? Let
Olga Platt know at
724-465-2073 and
she will send a bro-
chure & short letter
describing LWVIC's
activities.

November 6 – Election Day - Please, go out and Vote!

November 7—Board meeting. Noon. Diane Duntley's home

November 13—Immigration Study Committee meeting—Susan McClure's home, 527 Shryock Avenue, Indiana 7:00 pm

November 28—Air Quality Committee meeting, Clarice Reber's home, 1235 Oak Street, Indiana, 7:00 pm

December 1 - Interclub Luncheon. AAUW to host—11:30 am Rustic Lodge Cost - \$15.00. contact Iris Holtz or Sherene Hess for reservations.

January 19, 2008—Immigration Study Consensus meeting.
Breakfast meeting at Fire Mountain, 9:00 am. **SAVE THE DATE!**

Fall, 2007 On-Line Voters
Guide available at:
www.palwv.org/Indiana

