

# VOTER

League of Women  
Voters of Indiana  
County, Pennsylvania



LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

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## LWVIC Board of Directors, 2011-12

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## Our Commit- tees:

- Environmental  
Issues
- Library Issues
- Child Welfare
- Voters Services

## LWVPA Convention and Looking Ahead

By Sherene Hess, President

In June, Mary Beth Sweeney and I attended the biennial convention of the LWV of Pennsylvania in Bucks County. Convention 2011 was inspirational, and there were several highlights.

Most notable was the recognition of LWV of Indiana County for all of the work that has been done in the past few years on raising awareness of natural gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale formation. State Board member Roberta Winters presented a nice plaque and spoke heartfelt words of appreciation for our contributions to the statewide study of this important issue. Advocacy continues with positions on pooling, pipeline inspection and enforcement, regulation, and legislation and ordinances adopted unanimously at Convention. Visit [www.palwv.org](http://www.palwv.org) to see the new study guides.

Another terrific moment for Indiana LWV was the election of Mary Beth to the state board. It's a significant commitment to serve LWV in this new capacity and we are very proud to be her "home" league.

Other highlights: Kathleen Hall Jamieson from the University of PA Annenberg Center talked about "How the New Media is Affecting Us and Our Politics". Take-away: new media has diluted the ability to actually engage in the complex conversations that need to take place.

Past National and State LWV president Nancy Neuman spoke at dinner and emphasized the core values of League, careful study, consensus building and speaking with one voice.

The current LWVUS president Elisabeth MacNamara also spoke about the Power of the Vote and how the League's mission in its inaugural year, 1920, still holds in 2011: find and eliminate legal barriers to voting, educate new voters on the political process, register new voters, provide non-partisan voter information and hold elected officials accountable.

Fall promises a new start to implementing the program goals that LWVIC approved at its annual meeting in May. We'll put our calendar together at the retreat on August 11 at Whitey's Eatery.

As we prepare for another year of voter education and issue study, I would like to thank all of the folks who have been working tirelessly on the Marcellus Shale issue; and to those working on the newly formed Library Issues committee.

And to all those members who have worked on the many other LWVIC activities during the past 12 months: THANK YOU! And remember, even if you are not active in the League at this time, your membership is so important and strengthens the voice of this great organization. Enjoy your summer!

*Sherene*

PS. See what LWVUS and LWVPA are doing at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) and [www.palwv.org](http://www.palwv.org)

■ The Primer on PA's tax structure from the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center is timely reading. According to the report, PA's overall tax and spending levels compare favorably with other states, but the Commonwealth's tax system is highly regressive. LWVPA has a Fiscal Policy position, but we do not have an issue specialist in this area. Also, our entire Fiscal Policy position is in need of review.

[http://www.pennbpc.org/pdf/PBPC\\_Tax\\_Primer\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.pennbpc.org/pdf/PBPC_Tax_Primer_Summary.pdf)

<http://www.pennbpc.org/pabudget/primer.html>

## What Are the Noise Issues Surrounding Marcellus Shale Natural Gas Production?

The following information was compiled by Clarice Reber (LWVIC Environmental Issues Committee member) and is presented for your information.

**Summary:** Noise emitted from the drilling of Marcellus Shale natural gas wells is very intense (80-94 dBA) (decibels acoustic) and lasts for the duration of the drilling phase. Noise from compressor stations is very intense (90 dBA) and continues constantly until the facility is closed. Workers who work near these sites must wear hearing protection devices to prevent permanent hearing loss. Because noise levels as distant as 900 feet from drilling pads and compressor stations can reach 50 dBA, persons who reside, learn, or work within 900 feet of these facilities may find that the noise interferes with speech understanding, learning, health, sleep and sense of well-being.

### Noise Levels and Natural Gas Drilling/Production

Noise during natural gas drilling comes from trucks, drilling and fracking rigs, compressors and construction equipment. During the drilling phase, noise levels have been reported between 80-94 dBA at a distance of 50 feet from the equipment in Sutter County, California. Construction noise can be intermittent or fairly constant with multiple pieces of equipment operating simultaneously. Noise attenuates with distance, barriers, weather conditions, and surfaces that reflect sound among others. A study at La Plata County, CO reported average construction noise to be 65dBA 500 feet from the source. Construction noise typically lasts for several weeks, 24 hours per day. Some municipalities require lower noise levels at night. Compressor noise appears to be more problematic because it does not go away after a few weeks. It is present 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Following are just a few examples of noise levels.

Sutter County Compressor noise:	94 dBA 10 -15 feet from the compressor
	50 dBA at 920 feet (estimated)
La Plata County Compressor noise:	50 dBA 375 feet from the property boundary
Bureau of Land Management:	89dBA at 50 feet from source
	71 dBA at 400 feet from source (estimated)

Typical ambient noise levels in rural, non-commercial areas are reported at 35-45 dBA. In urban areas, noise levels vary with the type of neighborhood; suburban areas measure more like rural areas, and busy commercial areas measure much higher at 60 dBA or higher.

### Humans and Noise

#### Harm to Hearing

It is well established that noise levels at and above 80 dB spl (decibels measuring sound pressure levels) are known to harm human hearing. Certainly, workers who work on the drilling pad or in close proximity to the compressor would be at risk for hearing loss without the use of noise protection devices and could still be at risk for hearing loss if their exposure is prolonged and noise levels are high enough. OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) has regulations regarding exposure of workers to noise.

#### Annoyance/Health Effects of Noise

An interesting distinction should be made between the noise level, the **intensity** of the noise in dB, and the individual's perception of noise, **loudness**. Generally one figures that an increase of 10 dB in noise level will double the individual's perception of loudness. (We are assuming a normal hearing mechanism.) So if one lives in a quiet residential neighborhood or rural area and the noise level is increased by only 10 dB, one perceives the noise to be significantly louder. It is annoying; it has doubled in loudness. Generally, during the day, most people do not find sound of 50 dBA to be highly annoying, although constant noise is more annoying than intermittent noise. People seem to vary in what noises they find annoying. Some research suggests that very low frequency noises can be especially annoying to persons, creating restlessness and irritability. Certainly there are anecdotal reports of citizens being very annoyed by compressor noise.

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that sleep starts to be affected with continuous noise at 30 dBA; therefore, nighttime compressor noise of 50 dBA could be problematic to householders. The WHO reports other health effects of noise to be increased blood pressure, increased cholesterol levels, and cardiovascular disease.

#### Affect on Understanding of Speech

We also know that ability to understand speech in noise is decreased especially if one has hearing loss, wears a hearing aid, or has normal hearing, but is aging. The WHO states that sound levels of 35 dBA or less are required for clear speech perception. We know that children learn less efficiently in noisy classrooms especially if they have hearing loss, auditory processing disabilities, or learning disabilities. Classrooms that are quiet (35 dBA) are better learning environments and are essential for children with hearing loss. Given this information, if drilling or compressor noise increases ambient noise levels above 35 dBA in a home or school, it could affect a person's ability to understand speech and, thus, the efficiency of learning.

Continued on Page 3, Noise Issues

## Current Legislation Affecting Education

### Exceptions to Act 1 – HB1326, SB911

Would disallow all exceptions that would permit school districts to raise taxes above the index level (this year 1.4%) without holding a referendum and would rescind any exceptions that have already been approved for the coming school year. With increased costs of special education and pension payments (which are out of the districts' control), school districts would have to make cuts.

**TAKE ACTION:** Write, email, and/or call your State Representative asking her/him to vote against this bill.

### Senate Bill 1 – Voucher and Educational Improvement Tax Credit Bill – vote likely after budget is decided

Would provide taxpayer money for vouchers for children to attend nonpublic and public schools out of their districts.

**TAKE ACTION:** Write, email, and/or call your State Representative and State Senator asking them to oppose this bill.

### Charter School Revisions – SB904, HB1348 - vote likely to come up in the fall

Would revise charter school regulation to take authority from the local school district

Would make it easier for charter schools to take over public schools

Would increase expansion of charter schools

Would revise cyber charter schools to make funding fairer

### WATCH FOR LEGISLATION

Information about each of these bills can be found online. Go to <http://www.house.state.pa.us/index.cfm> and enter the bill number at the top of the page.

More information about SB1 can be found at the coalition, Pennsylvanians Opposed to Vouchers, website: <http://www.paopposedtovouchers.org>.

Additional information about various education issues can be found at [www.psea.org](http://www.psea.org), [www.psba.org](http://www.psba.org), and Education Law Center <http://www.elc-pa.org>, and Keystone State Education Coalition <http://www.keystonestateeducationcoalition.blogspot.com>.

continued from page 2, Noise Issues

In summary, noise produced by Marcellus Shale natural gas production could interfere with the daily living activities of our citizens who live in close proximity to compressor stations, in particular. It is an issue worthy of more study and thought.

### References

World Health Organization, *Guidelines for Community Noise*, found 4/15/11 at <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/1999/a68672.pdf>

World Health Organization, *Burden of disease from environmental noise: Quantification of healthy life years lost in Europe*, found 4/15/11 at <http://docs.wind-watch.org/WHO-burden-of-disease-from-environmental-noise-2011.pdf>

Earthworks, Noise Resources, found 4/15/11 at <http://www.earthworksaction.org/noiseresources.cfm#OILGASNOISE>

*Sutter County General Plan, Background Report* found 4/15/11 at <http://ceres.ca.gov/planning/genplan/sutter/index.html>

A newsletter of the  
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#### CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

**July 21, 2011, 9:00 am—4:00 pm**—Indiana County Natural Gas Expo, Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex

**August 11, 2011, 9:00 am**—Board Retreat, Whitey's Peetza, Graceton

**August 22, 2011, 6:30 pm**— Apollo Public Library — Marcellus Shale and Your Drinking Water, **Call the library to reserve your spot: (724) 478-4214**

**September 12, 2011, 7:00 pm**—Board Meeting, All Members Welcome, Location to be Announced

**Know someone who may be interested in membership? Let President Sherene Hess know at 724-762-4162 and she will send a brochure & short letter describing LWWIC's activities.**

How do you know if a campaign ad is telling the truth? Cut through the spin at [www.factcheck.org](http://www.factcheck.org). And as election season approaches, check out [www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org) for information on candidates.

#### **Our 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 education and advocacy.*

