

# VOTER

League of Women  
Voters of Indiana  
County, Pennsylvania



LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

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## UPDATE: Consensus Study on the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education

By Jane Lord, Study Committee Chair

Our November 12 consensus meeting not only generated insight into the issue of the role of the federal government in public education, but it also demonstrated the intrinsic value of the consensus process. Faced with such a broad issue with so many ramifications, our group immediately got stuck on the first question and initially reached only tenuous agreement on several others. But, as we talked through subsequent sections, common views and ideas began to emerge. Ironically, as we *questioned the questions*, we gradually moved toward clarity. Finally going back to questions that had stumped us, we could answer with a greater sense of certainty. In this era of media hype, it was exhilarating to experience such a positive process of rational discourse!

On a personal note, working with the study committee—Karen Ross, Lea Masiello, and Edwina Vold—was an absolute pleasure. While each brought experiential knowledge and insight to the process, they also put many hours into reading background materials, organizing information, and developing their presentations. We are all grateful to Susan McClure for jumping in at the last minute to take on the recorder's role. And, Beth Marshall's facilitation was clearly key to the success of the consensus process.

LWVUS is presently developing a policy position based on the results of this national grassroots study. You can see how LWVIC responded to the national LWV's consensus questions at our website at [www.palwv.org/indiana](http://www.palwv.org/indiana).

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## Marcellus Shale Legislative Update: House Bill 1950

LWVIC President Sherene Hess and Environmental Issues Committee Chair Clarice Reber met with Representative Dave Reed in November to share the League's concerns about the original House Bill 1950, otherwise known as the House Impact Fee, a bill that would levy a fee on Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling in Pennsylvania and take away local government control. Following is a summary of the items discussed with Representative Reed:

- The bill would restrict what municipalities could and could not regulate regarding gas extraction operations within their boundaries.
- Who are the non-Commonwealth permit reviewers? What is the role of county conservation districts?
- Growing Greener funds should not be dependent on drilling in state lands.
- Bonding fees proposed are inadequate. (It costs a minimum of \$100,000 to plug abandoned and orphan wells.)
- The well fee is too low. Per HB 1950, it works out to about a 1% fee (approximately \$160,000 on a well that may well make \$16 million).
- The county must assess and administer fees which is an expensive way to do things. There is a concern that any income realized will be lost to administrative costs. Every county must hire people to do this

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## LWVIC Announces The Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Award

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County (LWVIC) would like to announce the creation of a new award in honor of Peggy Clark. This award is being established to recognize individuals, groups or businesses in southwestern PA who show exemplary leadership and active participation on policy issues in protecting or preserving our environmental resources. It will promote citizens working within the system at the local level to make a change for a better world. The award will be "*The Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Award*" and will be awarded at the annual dinner.

Candidates for the award will demonstrate grassroots leadership in the following areas:

- Preservation and/or protection of the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem and maximum protection of public health and the environment.
- Grassroots activism to preserve or protect our precious natural resources.

This leadership can take a variety of forms:

- New or innovative technology to prevent degradation of our environmental resources
- Activities that show a direct positive effect on our environmental resources
- Activities of notable stewardship of the environment
- Activities to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater, drinking water and our environment
- Activities to reduce water pollution from direct point-source discharges and from indirect non-point sources
- Development of policies to achieve water quality essential for maintaining species populations and diversity, including measures to protect lakes, estuaries, wetlands and in-stream flows

Peggy Clark has had a long-term interest in environmental issues, especially issues related to energy extraction. Peggy and her family lived on a farm in Indiana County and lost their water due to deep coal mining. At that time there were some laws in place to protect some homeowners but nothing to protect those who lost their water or who built a home after 1966 and had land subsidence occur. Peggy organized the Citizens Against Water Loss due to Mining (CAWLM) in the 1970s to lobby for a state law to protect against water loss resulting from deep mining. Peggy testified hundreds of times, lobbied legislators and Department of Environmental Protection employees, and conducted public education projects in her efforts to protect water resources. She was always calm, organized, and knowledgeable.

In the 1980s DEP set up a mediation process to try and resolve problems with deep mining, including water loss and subsidence. Participants in this process included the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, CAWLM, and several other environmental and industry groups. This mediation process eventually resulted in the passage of Act 54 of 1994. Although Act 54 was not as far-reaching as Peggy wanted to achieve, it made a huge difference to residents of rural PA. Peggy's work is local activism at its best.

Peggy was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the late 80's and fought cancer in addition to continuing to fight to protect our water resources. She is a grassroots activist who made a difference not only in the county but throughout the state. She is a remarkable person who has continued her work for environmental protection for over four decades. Peggy Clark joined the League of Women Voters of Indiana County in 1983 and was a board member for several years. She was an active member of the environmental committee and worked on many environmental issues as long as her health allowed.

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(Continued from page 1—Marcellus Shale Legislative Update: House Bill 1950)

financial work. (In addition, someone will be needed in the planning office to monitor everything so that objections, etc. get to the state within 15 days of permit application submission.) This bill could be very expensive for local governments and, therefore, not really relief.

- The Environmental Quality Board can only make regulations to consider impact on a variety of listed issues. Why the limitation? What if they think up additional issues requiring a regulation?
- Casing rules should reflect current best practices. This is one of the known (from science and experience) weak spots in the production/drilling process. If technology improves, new practices should be implemented immediately.
- Water pollution is presumed if within 2500 feet of a well and a complaint is filed within 12 months, but we know that wells can extend well beyond 2500 feet. Why not extend the length as far as the well goes, at a minimum? What happens when a well goes bad later?
- Regarding the Oil and Gas Technical Advisory Board, the makeup sounds like all of the three people are industry types. Shouldn't there be at least one more neutral person, or are there no neutral oil and gas professionals? There is a clear need for a citizen's advocate.

Both the House and Senate added language into their Marcellus Shale bills requiring local governments to allow natural gas wells to operate in all zones, including residential. This method of restricting local zoning options is one of the few major areas where leaders from both chambers are on the same page. That means the odds are good that this provision will end up in the final bill. The near-identical sections of HB 1950 and SB 1100 also empower Pennsylvania's Attorney General to serve as the judge of whether or not a municipality's drilling ordinances are "reasonable." Under the provisions, the Attorney General can bar a township or borough from receiving any impact fee revenue. The Attorney General would also have the power to bring suit against the offending municipality in Commonwealth Court. In addition, there are several major differences between the impact fees passed by the House and Senate.

For up-to-date information on both the House and Senate bills and much more related to Marcellus Shale impacts, go to: <http://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/>.

## New Website Design for LWVUS

The national League is proud to unveil its new website at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org). It features a **modernized way of informing and interacting with the public**. LWVUS wants to grow our community and expand our resources, so as we enter an election year, it hopes this new site will better showcase the work done by Leagues – local, state and national. The **new site has improved search functionality, is more simply organized, and does not require you to log in to access most of the content**. As we look forward to 2012 and our ability to attract and engage more people around the country, the new website will provide more useful and compelling information to assist in leading the League and help local Leagues effectively share our impacts. If YOU know someone who might be interested in joining our local league, the new LWVUS website is a great way to learn how the League works.

## Donna's Rosemary Remembrance Cookies

Following is a recipe from Donna Streithau that comes to us via Beth Marshall. Enjoy!

### Ingredients:

½ C butter, ½ C olive oil (not extra virgin), 1 ½ C sugar, 2 eggs, 3 C flour, 3 tbs wheat germ, 2 tsp cream of tartar, 1 tsp soda, ¼ tsp salt, 2 tsp chopped fresh rosemary, ½ tsp to 1 tsp grated lemon peel

Cream together butter, oil and sugar. Add eggs and beat until creamy. Blend dry ingredients together and add rosemary and lemon peel. Add to creamed mixture. Form dough into small balls (heaped tsp sized) and place on an ungreased baking sheet. Allow plenty of room for them to spread out. Flatten each with the bottom of a glass that has been dipped in sugar. (The cookies spread beyond this.) Bake at 400 degrees for about 8 minutes. Cool on racks. Enjoy and share with friends and family. Recipe makes about 3 1/2 dozen cookies.

A newsletter of the  
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## CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

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.

**Monday, December 12, 2011, 7:00 pm**—Board Meeting, All Members Welcome, Diane Duntley's home (204 Greenview Court, Indiana)

**Monday, January 30, 2012, 5:30 pm**—Membership and Guest Potluck Dinner and Program (See information below.)

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**MEMBER POTLUCK DINNER & MEETING**  
**Monday, January 30, 2012**  
**Potluck Dinner and Informational Panel on Education**  
Dinner at 5:30 pm, Location To Be Announced, Short Business Meeting followed by Panel Discussion

***Non Traditional Forms of Education (Charter and Cyber Schools, Homeschooling, Private School) and How They Affect Public Education***

Bring a guest and a dish to share.

### **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.*