



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WARREN COUNTY



Encouraging active and informed participation in government since 1960

The Voter

Spring 2024

1. **Active Year for Voter Registration:** Sally Beckerink, LWVWC VP for Voter Services, led our members and other volunteers in a very active campaign that contributed to the registration of 100 high school students and contributed to the County's tally of 229 new voters. Read more on p. 2
2. **Fall Membership Meeting Featured Historical Presentation:** Our Fall Membership Meeting was held on November 8, 2023 at the Crary Gallery. The featured program was a presentation by Assistant DA Cody Brown, followed by a very informative presentation on Ranked Choice Voting by VP for Communications Phyllis Wright and member Sherry Albrecht. See more on p.2
3. **Observer Corps:** LWVWC volunteers have become regular observers at County Commissioner meetings and work sessions. This leads to increased awareness among our County leaders about the LWVWC and increases our understanding of the diverse work that our County Commissioners do. We will also attend any Board of Elections meetings that are scheduled, although there has been little activity on that front so far. If you'd like to join the round-robin of volunteers, please let someone on the Executive Committee or Jane Dunshie know of your interest. It's a commitment of about 4 hours/month.
4. **LWVWC Members attend Legislative Forum hosted by Erie LWV on January 18, 2024:** Our Senator Scott Hutchinson, who also represents part of Erie, was one of the Legislators who answered questions for the audience. For more information, see p. 3.
5. **LWVWC Members meet with Senator Hutchinson's staff about legislative rules: Phyllis Wright and Susan Stout met with Mary Kushner of Senator Hutchinson's staff at her office in the Warren County Visitor's Bureau on March 4, 2024, to discuss the report from FairDistrictsPA "Dysfunction by Design- Why PA State Legislature is so Unproductive, and How We Can Fix It" about the challenges to bipartisan legislation posed by PA Legislative Rules.**
6. **Annual Sunshine Week (March 10-16, 2024) Celebration:** We hosted Christopher Baxter, Executive Director of Spotlight PA at the Warren Library. Read more on p. 3
7. **LWVPA Leaders visit Warren County LWV:** On March 22 The Executive Committee and other members of LWVWC met with Amy Widstrom, Executive Director of the LWVPA, and Maria Delgado-Santanta, President LWVPA. Read more on p. 3.
8. **Harrisburg LWV Lobby Day – May 8, 2024:** LWVWC Member Jane Dunshie traveled to Harrisburg to join with nearly 50 other LWVPA members reaching out to legislators at the Capital. See her story on p. 3.
9. **Fair Districts PA Focuses on Redistricting Reform for 2030 Census:** See p. 4.
10. **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Accessibility:** Retiring VP for Programs Jennifer Bliss continues to represent the LWVWC on monthly ZOOM calls on this topic. The LWVWC policy statement on this topic can be found on our website.

Voter Registration and Voter Service Activities

With registration days at the library, Farmers Market, PRIDE, YMCA (participating in the “Be Well: What’s Your 60?” program) and schools we have had a successful year registering and servicing voters. In addition to voter registration activities, we were able to help voters ensure that their existing registration was with the party they wanted and will continue to provide education about correct use of the new format mail-in ballot and secrecy envelope.

Last fall Sally Beckerink corresponded and provided material to the three county schools and two charter schools. This spring she presented to *all the history classes* in all 4 county high schools! The result was interaction with 182 students in 11 classrooms, 40 new primary voters and 60 preregistered for the fall general election. Sally says, “I am confident we were partially responsible for the county’s new 229 voters this primary.” Sally continues to seek opportunities to register voters at festivals and gatherings of potential voters. Contact her if you’d like to help. ***Right now, we are particularly looking for volunteers to staff a voter registration table at the Warren PRIDE event on June 15.***

Membership

The LWVWC Fall Membership Meeting was held at the Crary Gallery. After a social hour with cider, cheese and crackers, apples, and cookies and dip, the program opened with a very interesting presentation by Assistant District Attorney Cody Brown. He presented new-to-many of details about the murder of President Judge Wade, complete with detailed slides of the courtroom in which it occurred and the bullet holes still found there.

This was followed by a membership meeting that included very interesting reports from several League members. These include a preview of our winter Sunshine Week visit from the Executive Director of Spotlight PA, and update on activities related to FairDistrictsPA regarding improved rules for both houses of the State Legislature and the upcoming campaign to amend the PA Constitution to establish an Independent Redistricting Commission. House Bill 1776 represents the work that the League and FairDistrictsPA and others have done to design a fair system for redistricting that would allow citizens to choose their legislators rather than the other way around.

Sherry Albrecht gave a very interesting presentation on Ranked Choice Voting, or RCV, which had gotten headlines leading up to the November election, where it has been and will be used in contests in Alaska, NY, and other areas of the country. RCV is a priority for the PA League.

The League of Women Voters of Warren County welcomes our two newest members Nancy Sampson and Kitty Morse. The league appreciates new members as the work is plenty in fulfilling the mission of encouraging informed and active participation in government, working to increase the understanding of major public policy issues, and influencing public policy through education and advocacy while operating as a nonpartisan political organization.

We currently have 27 active members in good standing. Thank you for your participation!

Additionally, Membership VP Michelle Gray continues to maintain the website at lwvwc.org, the league’s Facebook page at facebook.com/warrencountypalwv, and monitor the email account at lwvwc@yahoo.com.

Please encourage your friends to attend the league’s events and meetings.

Erie League of Women Voters hosts Legislative Forum

Phyllis Wright and Sherry Albrecht attended a general legislative forum on January 18, 2024 hosted by the League of Women Voters of Erie that included Senator Scott Hutchinson, who also represents Warren County in Harrisburg. Phyllis Wright sent a summary of the questions that were posed to Senator Hutchinson, and his answers. Topics included the economy, education, infrastructure, ballot measures, and an opportunity for Senator Hutchinson to identify an issue about which he was passionate. To learn his answers, look for Phyllis' summary in your inbox or files (she sent it on February 3). If you've misplaced it and would like to see it again, let the editor of the Voter know (slstout@westpa.net).

Sunshine Week Celebration, March 14, 2024

March 10-16 was Sunshine Week in 2024. The Warren County Commissioners issued a Sunshine Week Proclamation that mentioned open government and our League. We sponsored our seventh local Sunshine Week program on Thursday, March 14, 2024. Program Chair Jennifer Bliss introduced the speaker Christopher Baxter. He is the founding editor, current President, and CEO of SpotlightPA. Mr. Baxter's program, A Bold New Path for News, described what his news organization does to uphold government transparency and get truth to the public. He gave specific examples of how independent investigative journalism can lead to opening up for public view issues that need to be aired. What happens next is up to the governmental body involved and the public. SpotlightPA has three publications which are free and can be accessed online and via email. As a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan organization, SpotlightPA does make appeals for donations which are tax deductible, and one was made that night.



Harrisburg Lobby Day 2024

The PA state league sponsored 2024 LWVPA Lobby Day at the PA Capitol on Wednesday, May 8. Local member Jane Dunshie participated. During an appointment with Representative Kathy Rapp (District 65) Jane asked questions and shared the League's position on a variety of issues while emphasizing the PA House Bill on redistricting. HB1776 proposes a Constitutional Amendment creating an independent redistricting commission. Jane asked and shared similarly with Senator Scott Hutchinson (District 21) in a separate meeting. During their responses Rep Rapp and Sen Hutchinson showed their skepticism about the ability of any process being able to select a Redistricting Commission that will act in a nonpartisan fashion.

There were 6000 visitors inside the Capitol the day before Jane's visit. There were several rallies in the rotunda, just as there was one for the League, on the 8th. Attendance (48) was higher than last year's League capitol gathering. Please consider attending in a future year! It's an exciting time to be in the Capitol.

LWVPA Leaders visit Warren County LWV

Our Local LWV recently met with leaders of the State League, Amy Widestrom, Executive Director of the LWVPA, and Maria Delgado-Santanta, President LWVPA. Since we are a small League it was exciting to be able to host, share our concerns, and get feedback from our leaders.

Amy has just recently, January 24, accepted the position as Executive Director and is trying to get to know Local Leagues, our needs, interests, and ways the State League and its staff can better support us and our work. Maria emphasized reaching out to new members with equity, diversity and inclusion goals.



We discussed our League's activities, such as the Sunshine Week program, the Government Directory, Observer Core, Candidate runs, Election Law Study and Voter registration activities in schools, libraries and other public events.

Amy noted how educational programs that provide non-partisan resources for citizens, convenient methods to vote, and getting trust back into the election process is a priority. She will be sending out monthly updates from the staff at LWVPA as well as having zoom meetings.

Fair Districts PA Focuses on Redistricting Reform for 2030 Census

The article below was printed in the May 18, 2024 issue of the Warren Times Observer, and offers a good summary of the current efforts of FairDistricts PA:

Work is underway for fair redistricting

By **PHYLLIS WRIGHT, ALICE PEDERSEN and SUSAN STOUT**

Even as excitement mounts about the upcoming 2024 elections, work is already underway to ensure increased redistricting fairness after the 2030 Census.

A bipartisan coalition led by Fair Districts PA has drafted a constitutional amendment to create an Independent Redistricting Commission for PA. It was introduced in the House of Representatives on April 14, 2024 as House Bill 1776, sponsored by Representatives Samuelson and Gillen. Sen. Tim Kearney, sponsor of the parallel Senate Bill 1076, de-

scribes the work this way: "The legislation represents the best of our democracy, puts our noble ideals over worst instincts and transcends party lines." That's been the Fair Districts PA goal from the start: district lines that don't give preference to either party, but allow all communities and all voters an equal voice.

The Legislation would amend Pennsylvania's Constitution to establish an Independent Redistricting Commission consisting of 11 members: four voters registered with each of the two major political parties, and three voters not registered with a major party. It would

reflect PA's geographic, ethnic, racial, and gender diversity. The legislation would also establish clear and verified metrics for identifying the fairest district maps.

Why are people already working on this when the census is six years away? Amending the PA Constitution is a long process. Amendments must pass both houses of the legislature twice, in consecutive sessions, and then go before the people in a referendum.

To learn more about this effort, go to <https://www.fairdistrictspa.com> or to the local Warren League of Women Voters web page www.lwvwc.org

(note wc for Warren Co.).

To support this effort, let your legislators know of your support. Contact District 65 House of Representatives member Kathy Rapp at (kl-rapp@pahousegop.com) and District 21 Senator Scott Hutchinson (shutchinson@pasen.gov). Hutchinson was a co-sponsor of 2021 legislation that would have established criteria for fair redistricting, so be sure to thank him for that in your email.

Phyllis Wright, Alice Pedersen and Susan Stout are members of the League of Women Voters of Warren County.