



# The Voter

Winter 2022

Please send feedback or questions about the newsletter to [slstout@westpa.net](mailto:slstout@westpa.net). Throughout, text in **GREEN** highlights opportunities for you to take action.

1. **Starting January 20, 2022 at the Conewango Club: Season-long study of Election Reform and Voting Rights – more on page 2.**

Remember that paragraph we always read at the beginning of candidate forums and sometimes use in letters to the editor, etc.? **“After study and member agreement, the League supports or opposes issues, but never supports or opposes candidates or political parties.”** It’s been so long since our League actually conducted or participated in a study that you may not know or remember what a study is. Join us on January 20 or beyond to study the full suite of issues connected with all the national discussion on **Election Reform and Voting Rights** so that we can form consensus positions for our League and so that we can all be effective and informed participants in the discussion right as it heats up in Pennsylvania.

If you are unable to participate in the January 20 In-Person Introduction to the Study, you can still participate. See p. 2.

2. **There is still *just barely* time to comment on the proposed PA state house and senate districts – see p. 3.**
3. 2021 LWVWC - In case you missed these (or to celebrate your memories if you participated):
  - a. The League of Women Voters of Warren and Clarion County interviewed Senator Scott Hutchinson on February 24 – *more on page 4.*
  - b. We sponsored a People-Powered Day of Action on May 6 – *more on page 3.*
  - c. Voter Services activities were highlighted by Voter Registration at the Farmers’ Market in the fall and at the Warren County LGBTQTA Rally on June 26
  - d. Our Annual Meeting featured a great presentation from Lisa Rivett and Krystle Ranson of the Warren County Board of Elections. The Executive Committee touched base again with Krystle after the fall election. They made all the national issues about vote integrity real and local. *More on page 5.*
  - e. Our fall Membership Meeting featured presentations and discussion with Warren City Mayoral Candidates Phil Gilbert and David Wortman. *What a refreshingly civil and informative discussion we hosted! More on p. 5.*
4. Three Cheers to Sally Eaton and Jane Dunshie and others for the new Government Directory after the 2020 elections. And heartfelt gratitude to the Sally Sokolski fund for their financial support. Let Jane Dunshie know if you need more Government Directories.
5. **In Memoriam – Our League lost two wonderful long-time members this year, Barbara Tubbs and Mary Schorman. See more on p. 6.**

## Election Reform and Voting Rights Study

Please join us for dinner on Thursday, January 20, to launch an in-depth study of the issues surrounding Election Reform and Voting Rights. The League of Women Voters takes action on an issue only when we have a position addressing it. If the members have not studied and come to consensus on a policy issue, the League has no position and therefore cannot take action. Studies (whether national, state, or local) are a defined process during which we undertake thorough pursuit of facts and details, both positive and negative, and come to consensus about policy. A more detailed description of the study process (this one tailored for national studies) can be found here: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/other-issues-tools/guidelines-lwvus-studies>

**Study Objective:** The League of Women Voters of PA (LWVPA) has a very detailed position regarding elections and voting rights. It can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/48resmx> . We support the current LWVPA position on Election Laws. The plan for our local study is to help us understand how to support that position or request a statewide study to update the position in the face of changes in technology and policy (including proposed future changes to election laws) and develop positions that address these. The the LWVPA “Position in Brief is:”

**LWVPA supports effective election laws that guarantee a citizen’s right to vote, ensure that elections are accessible, transparent, fair, and secure, promote[d] universal voter participation, and provide voters with meaningful choices when they go to the polls.**

**How will we do it?** - At our January 20th meeting, we’ll form subcommittees and develop a calendar for the study. Subcommittees will study the issue and prepare presentations for the larger group. When all the subgroups have reported, we will develop a series of consensus statements based on our research, and our membership will vote on these statements. From the consensus statements, the Board will adopt our position.

Each subgroup will research their issue and produce a “study kit” for the rest of the membership. The study kit will include:

- a concise statement of the sub-issue,
- a packet of resources the subcommittee found most valuable, including articles, books, data in the form of charts or graphs, videos, discussion questions, potential speakers, and other resources
- an explanation of the issue,
- the current state of the issue in PA Law,
- any existing positions of the LWVPA or LWVUS,
- any relevant recent or proposed legislation,
- information about how the issue is handled in other states,
- concerns that have been raised in the public discourse about the issue.
- Pros and Cons of current situation and proposed changes
- Other relevant information
- A proposed consensus statement regarding the issue

**When will we do it?** This will be discussed at the January 20 meeting. It would be wonderful to have our full consensus in advance of the May 17 Pennsylvania primaries. Should we have all subgroups report at a single long meeting near the end of this period, or should we have monthly meetings at which one or more subgroups will report?

**What sub-issues will we study, and who will chair each sub-issue group?**

- Drop Boxes – Phyllis Wright

- Registration – Sally Beckerink
- Voter IDs – Susan Swab and Christa Williams
- Mail-in, absentee and early voting – Barbara Scott and Susan Stout
- Third Party Review of Elections– Michelle Gray

See you on January 20. If you are unable to join us on the 20<sup>th</sup>, but want to be part of the study, please e-mail Secretary Susan Stout ([slstout@westpa.net](mailto:slstout@westpa.net)) indicating your interest and what subgroup you'd like to work with!

### Legislative Redistricting Hearings

**From Fair Districts PA:** On January 6, 7, 14, and 15 the Legislative Reapportionment Commission held four multi-hour public hearings. The public comment period closes on January 18 and maps will be finalized sometime soon after.

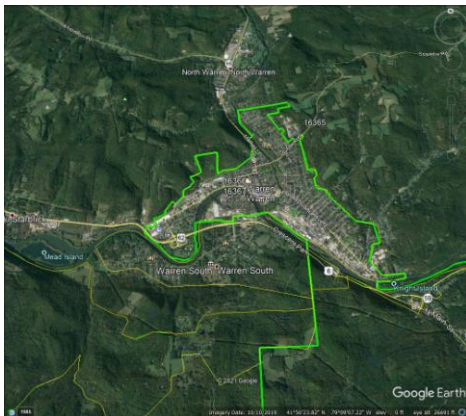
**About the maps:** A lot of information is flying around and unfortunately some of it is misleading. The proposed House map is NOT gerrymandered in favor of Democrats. By every criteria required by law it is far better than the current House map. It is more compact, more contiguous and splits fewer counties and municipalities. It goes a long way toward undoing twenty years of distorted districts.

In reaffirming the voices of voters, these maps by necessity appear to shift the probable outcomes of elections from a locked-in Republican advantage to a much more uncertain majority. That means the maps would require both parties to represent the people of Pennsylvania well, or face a shift in the next election.

Read more about the maps on the [FairDistrictsPA](http://FairDistrictsPA) website, and contrast them with citizen-developed maps at the [Draw The Lines PA](http://DrawTheLinesPA) website.

### *League of Women Voters of Warren County 2021 Accomplishments*

#### People-Powered Day of Action, April 29 (May 6 locally for weather reasons)



LWVWC organized our Day of Action around the theme of “It can happen here, and it did!” highlighting the way the redistricting after the 2000 Census split Warren County into two different Senatorial Districts. This image shows how Mead Township and the City of Warren were split out of the rest of the county and bundled with McKean County for a state senatorial district, complicating the communication of local issues to our state representatives. We organized demonstrations that share this image and related information and also published some information in the Warren Times Observer.

**Voter Registration Drives** were sponsored by LWVWC at the Farmers’ Market in the fall and at the Warren County LGBTQTA Rally on June 26.

## League of Women Voters Interviews State Senator Hutchinson



On Saturday, February 20, 2021, State Senator Scott Hutchinson (R-21<sup>st</sup>) was hosted by LWVWC on ZOOM to share information about legislative priorities for the current legislative session. The event was also attended by members of the Warren and Clarion Leagues.

Senator Hutchinson shared four high legislative priorities: jumpstarting the PA economy in the wake of the COVID pandemic; improving access to broadband services, particularly in rural areas; finding more ways for the State to help the crisis in EMS and fire services, again especially in rural areas; and leveraging his position as chair of the Senate Finance Committee to find ways, through taxation and other initiatives, to help Pennsylvania businesses thrive and make Pennsylvania an attractive destination for new businesses.

The legislative priorities of the Pennsylvania League of Women Voters focus in three broad areas: government reform; electoral reform; and the environment.

**Government reform:** The League expressed concern about proposed changes to the way judges are selected in Pennsylvania. The proposed changes would give substantial power to the legislature to control judicial districts. The League has long supported merit selection of judges rather than election. Senator Hutchinson opposes merit selection. He feels strongly that judicial districts would increase the probability that citizens would know or know of the candidates for judge on whom they were voting, but he expressed openness to delineating judicial districts by a commission.

The League supports study and revision of legislative rules. In recent years, bills with broad public input and bipartisan support have not been given a vote in the legislature, while other bills with no evidence of bipartisan support or public input have moved through the legislature quickly. The League believes in study or action to change the rules of both Houses of the Legislature to ensure votes on widely supported bills. Senator Hutchinson feels that it is very important that the Legislature make its own rules.

**Electoral Reform:** The League would like the Legislature to adopt a reform bill, called LACRA, or the Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act that would set objective fairness standards for the process of drawing new district lines based on the 2020 census. Senator Hutchinson became a co-sponsor the proposed legislation, but it never came to a floor vote in either house.

The League supports pre-canvassing of mail-in ballots that arrive in advance of Election Day, the highest priority recommendation of the commission that studied the May 2020 primary. Senator Hutchinson's highest priority is a clear chain of custody for every ballot. He is strongly opposed to elimination of the secrecy envelope. He expressed openness to pre-canvassing ballots if the enabling legislation ensures no break in the chain of custody for every citizen's ballot. With regard to other election reform issues, Senator Hutchinson is a strong supporter of the Electoral College for Federal elections and is opposed to the National Popular Vote Compact. He recognizes that more and more voters are registering as independents, and this may mean allowing hybrid or open primaries to give a higher proportion of citizens the ability to participate in primary elections.

Regarding environmental issues, the League of Women Voters supports Pennsylvania's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Senator Hutchinson is opposed, as Pennsylvania would be the first net energy exporter to enter RGGI.

**Our Annual Meeting** featured a great presentation from Lisa Rivett and Krystle Ranson of the Warren County Board of Elections. Lisa, retiring 14-year Director of Elections for Warren County, made all the national issues about vote integrity real and local. *Here's a short summary of Lisa Rivett's remarks:*

Lisa Rivett spoke about how the recent elections – the national general election in fall 2020 and the state municipal primary on May 18, 2021 – transpired in Warren County.

With recent changes in election law and the impacts of COVID, there were many more absentee and mail-in ballots than ever before – about 5600 in November 2020 and about 3000 in spring 2021. The Warren County Elections staff does everything they can to ensure that every vote counts. When they receive “naked ballots” – without any secrecy envelope – or incorrectly signed secrecy ballots, they try to get them back to the voters to correct before the election. Lisa has also picked up ballots for voters with special needs, such as those at nursing homes or, this year, for a voter with COVID.

There have also been more provisional ballots than ever before – ballots cast at the polling place when the records suggest that the voter has already cast a mail-in or absentee ballot, or other reason to be concerned about the vote. There are also many “adjudication ballots” – write-ins or ambiguous marks. Lisa noted that LWV member Karen Black received write-in votes in almost every precinct. All of these have to be individually adjudicated as part of the vote counting process, and this spring it took all day the Friday after the election and more than half the following Monday to process all the provisional ballots.

Due to post-processing, the spring 2021 primary votes were not fully certified until June 2, 2021.

**Warren County is in need of election workers – many are retiring.** It can be a long day, as poll workers usually need to be on site by 6 am to be sure everything is ready, and then must stay after the polls close to pack up the equipment and prepare items for the election office. In fall 2020, courthouse election workers stayed from 5 am on Election Day through 2:30 am the following day. Several members in attendance at our meeting have served as poll workers and as courthouse election workers, and confirmed that the job can be long but is very rewarding. Karen Black mentioned the benefits of “Pollpads” – tablet computers – used for voter sign-in. This spring was the first use of these, and they were very popular. Lisa told us that the Commissioners had provided these using CARES funding.

Phyllis Wright raised the issue of dispersed drop boxes for ballots, acknowledging that the issue seems to attract litigation. Lisa pointed out that drop boxes wouldn't allow the kind of checking about ballot accuracy that goes on in the Election Office, and couldn't protect against ballot harvesting, the practice of one person gathering up the ballots of many and dropping them all at once. Current law dictates that only voters may deliver their ballots. Additionally, if we did have drop boxes dispersed around the County, the Election Director would have to drive around to pick up the ballots in them daily, right at the time when there's lots of work in the Election Office readying the election.

Lisa suggested that nursing homes need to be educated about how to help their patients vote – sending applications to the home county, for example. She mentioned that the State Hospital does a good job of helping and encouraging their patients to apply for absentee ballots. She also explained that she keeps an eye on obituaries in the paper and a report that she receives from the Department of Health in order to exclude ballots that were cast before the election and the voter died between casting a ballot and election day.

*League members thanked Lisa for a wonderful presentation and for her years of service to the Community and her frequent support for League voter registration drives.*

**Our fall Membership Meeting:** The LWVWC meeting on October 14<sup>th</sup> at the Crary Art Gallery was a great success. It was well attended by members and guests, food and drink were abundant and delicious, and the “main event,” presentations by Warren City Mayor Candidates Phil Gilbert and David Wortman went just about perfectly. Both men spoke comfortably about their background and their plans, and were very receptive to questions, which were respectful but probing. *What a refreshingly civil and informative discussion we hosted!* Both candidates were glad they came, and two of the guests at the meeting joined the League – Paula Massa and Sue Borland.

### In Memoriam

The League of Women Voters of Warren County lost two long-time treasured members in 2021. The model of good citizenship and committed League service provided by Barbara A. Tubbs and Mary R. Schorman will inspire us for a long time.

**Barbara A. Tubbs** died on November 23, 2021 at 78. She was an active League of Women Voters member for decades and worked in support of the mission of bringing unbiased information to voters, and encouraging people to vote. She served as president which led to many contacts with other PA leagues and in our local communities. She regularly volunteered to register people to vote, gave many creative ideas to support the mission of the League, and served as a role model for many members.

Barb was one of the founders of "Leadership Warren", and for decades help organize bi weekly programs over 16 + week period for persons in business or other organizations to learn more about Warren --- and most important -- to learn the skills needed to be a leader. This included helping the director by arranging bi-weekly guests to speak, setting up tours of businesses, and aiding in developing community-wide programs/projects that better Warren County. Another behind the scenes role she held was a member of the Community Foundation Board that provides scholarships and supports organizations with start up funds, or new projects to better Warren County. Projects included promoting Warren tourism, supporting small business development, helping organizations working with individuals with special needs. She was an outstanding Girl Scout leader in her earlier days. Her 50-year+ career at our Warren Public Library was characterized by her ready availability to help library patrons. The list of organizations that Barb served as a thoughtful, quiet leader is much longer than this.

Barb was recognized with the WCCBI Community Service Award in 1999.

Our sympathy goes to her family. We will miss her smile, patience and love of the Warren League of Women Voters and Warren County.

**Mary Roos Schorman** died on March 13, 2021 at 94. She was a founding member of the League of Women Voters of Warren County, remaining active as long as she was able to get a ride to League meetings.

In addition to her service in the League, Mary is remembered for her career as a nurse, first at Warren General Hospital, later in the Warren County School District, and as a founding member of Hospice of Warren County. In particular, she volunteered for many years as a bereavement counselor, earning certification as a grief counselor. The Hospice of Warren County bereavement center was named the Schorman Center in her honor in 2019. Her community activities were numerous, and friends cherished her warmth and interest. These will be missed.

**And on the national scale**, I draw your attention to the recent loss of Lani Guinier, the first woman of color to achieve tenure at the Harvard Law School. Her areas of expertise included voting rights and election law, and if you don't know about her contributions, this memorial will introduce you: [In Memoriam: Lani Guinier 1950-2022](#).