

WE VOTER

League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh

VOLUME 28, No. 9

JUNE 2022

LWVPGH Annual Meeting

With the uptick in COVID infections, the LWVPGH Annual Meeting will NOT be held in person. Our Annual Meeting will still be held on Wednesday, June 29th, at 7pm, but virtually. A registration link will be sent out in the BLAST and available on our website the 2nd week of June. Please plan on attending as we need a quorum to conduct business.



LWVPGH members marching in the Juneteenth parade, June 2021. Info on the 2022 parade on page 4.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

CHOOSING OPTIMISM



The Spring Primary was just a few short weeks ago. Many League volunteers did an enormous amount of work prior to the Primary by working on League-sponsored forums, distributing election information all over Allegheny

County, working with college and university students as they got more involved in the democratic process, and working on election day as poll workers. The only glitch we encountered at my local poll was nearly running out of blank ballots because so many people were voting! I hope your election experience was as positive as mine. It's always rewarding to see so many friends and neighbors exercising their right to vote on Election Day.

All of us as League members recognize the importance of voting if we are to have a truly representative democracy. It's one of the ways we have of communicating with potential elected officials about what we'd like to see them do in office. We generally vote for those candidates whose views align most closely with ours. But, what happens after these folks are elected? We've all heard the informal comments that "our politicians don't do anything" or that "officials are focused on the wrong thing." Many of us don't understand why the things we voters and our chosen candidates support don't get enacted into law, whether that's voting rights legislation, changes in education funding, police reform, reproductive rights for women, or gun regulation.

We see evidence of that inaction whether it's through a leaked Supreme Court draft opinion about abortion or when we see the mass murders that recently occurred in Buffalo, NY and Uvalde, Texas. How do we fix that? Our Congressional and Legislative leaders need to hear from us about what we expect them to do in light of all this chaos. The League of Women Voters of Texas put out a very powerful statement about the gun violence in Uvalde, and how League members can address it. You can read the statement [here](#).

The truth is that legislative Rules controlling consideration of bills and debate about them are complicated and often in the control of a small minority of elected officials. That's true whether we're talking about the US Congress where the filibuster often blocks the ability for votes to occur, or the Pennsylvania Legislature where floor votes occur only when about a half dozen elected legislators agree to allow a vote. The Rules of the game matter, whether it's in politics or sports, and when we don't understand them, we don't "play" the game very well. In Pennsylvania, we will be hearing a lot more about Rules Reform before the newly elected Legislature takes office next January. It's important so we need to be paying attention to that over the next several months. If we can change the rules, we may be able to create a fairer system. Let's make sure we ask every candidate, state or federal, where they stand on the issue of rules reform.

Sometimes I get discouraged by the news and wonder if our system of governance is so broken that it can't be repaired, but then I remember the comment that I recently heard from a Board Member of the State League who said, "Our job as League members is to be professional optimists and to keep pushing to make improvements in the system." So, I am choosing to be an optimist and I hope you will be, too.

Maureen Grosheider

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A quote for our times

"The only thing that can stop a bad politician with a vote is a good citizen with a vote."

Tweeted by Jocelyn Benson, the Michigan secretary of state who stood up to Trump when he accused her of preparing to rig the vote in 2020.

LEAGUE MEETING STRUCTURE

Board Meetings

- ✓ **Second Monday of the month..**
Meeting: 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.,
currently by Zoom.

Local Area Unit Meetings

- ✓ **Pittsburgh Central:** Currently not meeting. Contact Martha Raak at 412-477-7572 or marbiker1@gmail.com
- ✓ **North Hills:** Currently not meeting. Contact Nancy Mott at 412-779-3089 or namott001@gmail.com
- ✓ **South Hills:** Currently not meeting. Contact Maureen Mamula at 412-760-9642 or mamula159@hotmail.com

Other Ongoing Meetings

- ✓ **Education Committee**
1st Wednesday by Zoom.
Chair is Kathy Nagle,
education@lwvpgh.org or
1-814-241-8149
- ✓ **Voter Service Committee**
1st & 3rd Tuesdays, 12:30 pm.
by Zoom. Additional meetings
occasionally added as needed.
Chair is Judy Clack at
512-731-0280
voterservice@lwvpgh.org
- ✓ **Advocacy Committee**
3rd Monday by Zoom.
Chair Michele Knoll
412-389-1387
advocacy@lwvpgh.org
- ✓ **Gun Safety Committee**
Currently not meeting.
Contact Nancy Naragon at
412-366-2446 or
development@lwvpgh.org
- ✓ **Non-fiction Book Club**
3rd Friday, 10:15 am. Meeting
place determined each month,
see calendar. Contact Joan Cucinotta, 412-708-2335 or
joancucinotta@gmail.com

This column will be updated
as in-person meetings become
possible or changes in League
programming are made.

June Calendar

June

1 Wed	Education Committee meeting, 7:00 pm on Zoom
7 Tue	Voter Service Committee meeting, 12:30-2:30 pm on Zoom
13 Mon	Board meeting, 12:30 pm, on Zoom
15 Wed	or 6/16 rain date. 10 am – 6 pm in shifts. Register Voters at McKeesport Good Neighbor Day Street Fair
17 Fri	Non-fiction Book Club meeting
18 Sat	10 am – 6 pm in shifts. Juneteenth, Jubilee Parade and Voter Registration. March or register voters
20 Mon	Advocacy Committee meeting, 11 am on Zoom
Tue 21	LWVPA Government Policy Update, 7:00-8:00 pm. Register to watch here . Updates are held the third Tuesday of each month.
June 23 - 26	LWVUS National Convention
29 Wed	LWVPGH Annual Meeting , 7:00 pm on Zoom

A Message from Phyllis Dreyfuss

I have just returned from an exhilarating evening representing our League at a legislative presentation at the AME church in Homewood. I wanted to share my very emotional reaction to this gathering.

No, there was not a huge number of neighborhood people – actually very few, but there were thirteen candidates for various offices that had five minutes each to present their positions. And what an impressive group they were. What struck me was this is democracy in action – some of the candidates have had public experience and been through the process, but there were "just citizens" who wanted to make a difference and were willing to give their energy and time – not slick and slim but straight forward and sincere.

Sometimes we get discouraged around the politics of the day, but as I listened and watched it renewed my belief in what we can do if we listen and work all together.

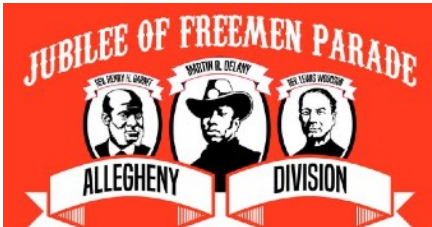
VOTER SERVICE REPORT by Judy Clack, Voter Service Chair



Upcoming Events

Tues. June 7, 12:30 – 2:30 pm on Zoom. **Voter Service Committee Meeting.** Review voter education efforts for the Primary. Brainstorm plans for the General Election: documents (rack card, larger font docs, door hangers), candidate forums, Vote411, voters' guide, mini guides, voter registration (high schools, colleges, and farmers' markets.) No meeting Tues., July 5. Resume meeting Tues. Aug. 2. Contact Judy Clack, voterservice@lwvpg.org, for Zoom link and agenda.

Wed. June 15 OR Rain Date, Thurs. June 16, 10 am – 6 pm in shifts, **McKeesport Good Neighbor Day Street Fair.** Register voters. Fifth Avenue between Market Street and Locust Street. Sign up for one or both days, but you'll only be needed for one. Sign up here: <https://forms.gle/t47p1nYbEkamUjRn7>. Complete details will be emailed to you. **Many more volunteers are needed.** Questions: voterservice@lwvpg.org



Sat. June 18, 10 am – 6 pm in shifts. **Juneteenth, Jubilee Parade and Voter Registration.** LWVPGH will be marching in the Juneteenth Parade from Freedom Square to Point State Park. This reenacts Pittsburgh's 1870 "Grand Jubilee Parade" celebrating the passage of the 15th Amendment establishing voting rights for African American men. LWVPGH will also have a voter information and registration booth at Point State Park following the parade. **Many more volunteers are needed.** Complete details will be

emailed to you. **Sign up here** to march or to register voters: <https://forms.gle/isC4kGGkSDPC1ymj9>. Questions, Judy Clack: voterservice@lwvpg.org

Candidate Forum held for the Primary Election



Shannon Perrine, WTAE Channel 4 anchor, moderated a 5-candidate Democratic primary debate for the 12th Congressional District at the WTAE studio on May 10. The LWVPGH co-sponsored the event with assistance from (left to right) Barbara Grabowski, Maureen Grosheider, Kathy Herbst, Judy Clack, Annette Shimer (chair) and Phyllis Bianculli.

Candidates for 12th Congressional District. All five candidates vying for the Democratic nomination for the 12th Congressional District in the May 17 Primary participated in the WTAE-TV/LWVPGH debate. Left to right: Will Parker, Jeff Woodard, Jerry Dickinson, Steve Irwin, and Summer Lee.

Continued next page



The newly formed Voter Registration Subcommittee felt that the LWVPGH needed something to hand out to all persons we encounter at voter registration events, whether they are already registered to vote or not, that would provide voter education information, tell them about the League of Women Voters, and invite them to join the League. This group came up with the idea of this 4" x 5" card to distribute year-round at voter registration drives of all sorts, colleges, high schools, and candidate forums. The images below show the front and back of the card. Thanks to Charlesa Nelson Formley, Barbara Grabowski, Maureen Grosheider, Amy Kleissas, Michele Knoll, Ruth Quint, and Judy Clack.

VOTING RESOURCES You Need

www.lwvpgh.org	Find Information on Voting, Elections, Candidates, and More for Allegheny County and PA
www.Vote411.org	LWV's Nonpartisan Candidate Guide
www.vote.pa.gov	PA's Comprehensive Voting Site
www.lwvpgh.org/ffc	"Facts for Citizens" LWVPGH's Guide to Elected Officials

Contact Us: Phone: 412-261-4284
Email: info@lwvpgh.org

 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF GREATER PITTSBURGH



REGISTER to VOTE HERE

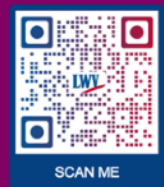


Empowering Voters.
Defending Democracy.

What Do We Do? We Help Community Members:

- register to vote
- find reliable voting, election, and candidate information
- learn more about how government works
- Take Action and advocate for issues you care about, like voting access, gun safety, healthcare, education, and the environment.

JOIN US!



LEAGUE ADVANCES WITH STUDENT MEMBERS by Judy Diorio, Membership Chair

The League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh prides itself on our robust Civic Education program in local high schools and colleges, and we want to enhance its impact by making it easier for young citizens we meet to join the LWV. We hope our membership will support this goal by voting to reduce student dues at our Annual Meeting, to be held virtually on June 29, 2022.



During their dynamic school visits, Civic Ed Director Amy Kleissas and her team of volunteers, including Susan Duncan, Joanne Moore, Michele Knoll, Susan Fair, Michele Grant, Doug Spindler, and Greg Garbinsky, have boosted students' knowledge of voting, elections, and government. They also have motivated some of these young citizens to join us in the LWVPGH, just as our other voter service and advocacy activities attract new volunteers. All Leagues strive to diversify and strengthen our membership base, and having additional youthful insights and enthusiasm complements our already successful group.

Our initial small group of highly interested teens and college student members will include the young woman from Elizabeth Forward High School who recently wrote to Amy, "I love what you and the other women did for our school. It is so important to spread awareness! I would love to be a part of this!"

Many of these young people lack the funds to pay our student dues, now set at \$30 per year. To ease this problem, the Board of Directors has voted to recommend to our members that we join LVWUS, LWVPA, and innumerable other state and local Leagues and reduce our student dues to \$0.

As most members know, of each \$60 primary membership fee, our local League retains only \$8. The rest of the dues payment goes to our national and state Leagues as the Per Member Payment (PMP), but both LWVPA and LVWUS waive the PMP for any free memberships we offer, so the financial impact on LWVPGH will be small. We will expect the student Leaguers to donate their time and talent to LWV goals of empowering voters and defending democracy.

The Civic Ed team, working with the Membership Director, has outlined a plan for student members, who will be mentored individually by LWVPGH volunteers, be helped to form their peer group, and will work on nonpartisan engagement and advocacy in their schools, supported by our League resources.

The team welcomes your collaboration with our efforts by voting to approve the dues reduction for student members and by helping to recruit and mentor these young members. If you have any questions about the proposed dues change or would like to volunteer to mentor, please contact Membership Director Judy Diorio at membership@lwpvpg.org.

BOOK CLUB REPORT by Marianne Novy

The Book Club reading for June: Our next book discussion will be on *How Democracies Die* by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, on Friday, June 17. It is likely to be in Anderson Park. We will not have a shelter reserved but will trust our luck. People who drive might bring chairs.

Discussion of *There is Nothing For You Here*, by Fiona Hill, May 20, 2022

The discussion involved Barb Grover, Ruth Quint, Judy Schryer, Marcia Bandes, Carolyn Stewart, Martha Raak, Carol Emerson, and Marianne Novy.

Continued next page

Book discussion, continued from previous page

Fiona Hill is a Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institute. From 2017 to 2019 she served as deputy assistant to the president and senior director for European and Russian affairs on the National Security Council. The book has four main sections: The Coal House, about her childhood; Divided House, about the beginning of her career in the US; White House, with her observations about Trump; and Our House, about how we in the United States can help make our country fairer and less divided.

We were interested in Hill's discussion of growing up in poverty in North East England and the many comparisons that could be made between her situation and those of others growing up in poverty—one of us was also a coal miner's daughter whose parents nevertheless gave her an appreciation of music, another had just read *The Yellow House*, about a Black woman growing up in New Orleans. Overall Hill repeatedly made comparisons between the UK, the US, and Russia (which she visited for the first time as a high school exchange student) with regard to deindustrialization leading to poverty, accompanied by distrust of experts, populism, and increasing authoritarianism. Her picture of a class-ridden UK, divided also by condescension toward regional accents like hers, in which it was common to place people by asking "Where are you from? What does/did your father do? Where did you go to school?" was challenged by one participant, whose daughter says that today people in England ask new people much less about their jobs than about their hobbies. Hill recalls many instances of her parents encouraging her by introducing her to or telling her about women (some in their extended family) who went to college and had interesting careers. She recalls many mentors who helped her out—a condition that continued through her career as some even gave her money for clothing.

Some of us noted how many women in politics share Hill's experience of having their expertise ignored, being considered too emotional, being judged on their clothing, and lacking reliable child care. Trump first assumed she was a secretary (he made that assumption about many women), and later called her "Russia bitch" when she challenged his "Off with her head" approach to Maria Yukanovich and others. She endured personal attacks from many other people as well, mostly online. The picture of Trump she gives is similar to what we have seen elsewhere—the egomaniac who does not pay attention to details, does not prepare for meetings, listens only to flatterers, ignores or scorns women who are not glamorous. She explains how Russia influenced the 2016 election by paying young people to pretend to be Americans and sow discord in social media, and how Podesta's e-mails to the DNC got hacked.

Hill, somewhat like Putnam in *The Upswing*, laments the fragmentation in US society, the poverty that harms our children, the policies that result in very few children from poor families attending good colleges. She believes that we need a domestically focused agency to spearhead socioeconomic policy, creating a new infrastructure of opportunity. She points out many examples of people benefiting from mentoring, retraining, public-private partnerships, and government grants to promote learning without incurring debt. It is often easier to move to another country than to move domestically, she believes, suggesting that moves from one part of the US to another with more jobs might be facilitated by developing internal sister city programs. She ends the book with four and a half pages of specific ideas of what people in various positions can do to help. These include, for retired people, spreading information about or volunteering as a mentor or teacher for a social service organization that serves the disadvantaged; collaborating and offering counsel to younger people and groups; offering free or affordable housing in your home to students, interns, school exchange participants, etc., perhaps in exchange for services.

We had a brief discussion of how the League is connecting with high school students and other young people, including suggestions that continuing personal relationships and even buying students clothes they might need at a crucial stage could be helpful.



<u>LWVGP Officers / Executive Committee</u>		<u>Local Area Meeting Chairs</u>	
President	Maureen Grosheider	Pgh. Central 412-477-7572	Martha Raak
V.P.1 Development, Gun	Nancy Naragon	North Hills 412-779-3089	Nancy Mott
V.P.2 Program	Cris Beuger	South Hills 412-760-9642	Maureen Mamula
Secretary	Mary Molloy		
Treasurer	Preston Shimer		
<u>Directors</u>		<u>Interest & Service Area Specialists</u>	
Voter Service	Judy Clack	VOTER Editor	Sue Broughton
Membership, Naturalization	Judy Diorio	Book Club	Joan Cucinotta
Social media	Emily Ferri	Gov. relations, Outreach	Jackie Dixon
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion	Terrie Griffin	Senior Housing	Nancy Mott
Publicity & Public Relations	Lydia Hatcher	Environment	Don Naragon
Civic Education	Amy Kleissas	PR, Communications, Blast	Eileen Olmsted
Advocacy	Michelle Knoll	Senior Housing	Linda Schneider
Education, Leg. Interviews	Kathy Nagle	Housing	Adelaide Smith
Webmaster	Ruth Quint	National / State Program	Carol Walton
Vote411 & Voter Guides	Annette Shimer		
<u>Staff</u>			
Community Information Center	Manager: Charlesa Nelson Formally	Marcellus Shale Grant	Manager: Heather Harr
<u>League Phone Numbers, Websites, and Social Media</u>			
Greater Pittsburgh	412-261-4284	lwvpgh.org	
Pennsylvania	717-234-1576 Ext 0	palwv.org	
National	202-429-1965	lwv.org	
Facebook	www.facebook.com	Search: League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh	