On the Road from Tennessee

According to Newsweek* and other sources, the voter turnout for the 2020 general election is projected to be 66.9%, the highest since the 1900 election, when turnout was 73.7%. Can you imagine the cheering by the legions of voting rights activists now gone? From Abigail Adams to John Lewis, they all had a stake in this. Of course, the election year was also marked by bias and bitter divide, challenges that would have been all too familiar to early suffrage activists.

Nonetheless, this election was a grand civics lesson. Millions watched votes being counted, learned details of the election process, and saw that democracy does work, even though it often isn’t pretty. Millions were engaged. How do we keep this momentum going? How do we get those first-time voters back to the polls for the next election?

One obstacle has already been overcome. The first time doing anything is the hardest. For those of us who have been voting regularly for many years, it’s hard to realize that, for many people, that first vote is intimidating. Where do I go? What are they going to ask me? How can I learn about the candidates? Well, the League has been addressing the latter for many years by providing nonpartisan information on candidates and issues. I’m not sure we’ve done all we can on the first two questions and maybe that gives us some additional direction as we head into 2021.

The year 2020 has been a tough one. Let’s look forward to the opportunities ahead.


To view the calendar, go to the LWV-BMC home page: [https://www.lwv-bmc.org](https://www.lwv-bmc.org)
For Your Information

Women: Tell Your Pandemic Story

From the Facebook site for the Centennial Celebration of the 19th Amendment: Women are being affected every day by conditions arising from the pandemic, whether it's a heavier burden of childcare, the larger number of women in frontline positions, or women caring for elders. Do you like to write? Your story could become a part of history. The National Women’s History Museum is sponsoring a journaling project open to all women. Feel free to spread the word. Click here to find out more.

Suffering from Information Exhaustion?

An article in The Conversation explores the sources of information exhaustion and gives some tips on handling the “endless flow of information is coming at us constantly.”

Judging Bias of News Sources

Maybe you’re resigned to information exhaustion. You can still be aware of biases and reliability of your favorite sources. Check out Truth or Fiction, a document prepared by LWV-BMC that lists fact checking and bias rating sites, along with other nonpartisan information.

Make America Ethical Again: Rebuilding the Public Trust

Common Cause Indiana will present its “Make America Ethical Again,” seminar on Monday, December 21, from 11:30 am-1:30 pm. With the intense election season behind us, we must look to the future to ensure that democracy survives.

A panel of state and national experts will argue the case that rebuilding the ethical framework of our government is key to strengthening American democracy.

- Ed Feigenbaum, founder of INGroup, a well-respected source of information about Indiana politics and government
- Former Indiana Congresswoman Jill Long Thompson, who has recently published The Character of American Democracy
- Stephen Spaulding, Senior Counsel for Common Cause and a former Congressional staffer.

Tickets for regular (non-attorney) attendees are $20.00. For further information contact host Julia Vaughn.

— Mary Ann Williams
19th Amendment Centennial

This issue ends our 2020 coverage of the centennial of the 19th Amendment. We’ve learned a lot since beginning this voyage and if upcoming publications are any indication, there is still much to learn. Historical information can still be found at www.lwv-bmc.org/centennial. Thanks for taking this journey with us!

Local Quilter Researches Suffragists of Color

Patricia C. Coleman, a Bloomington resident for 40 years, was featured in the November 22 issue of The Herald-Times. Coleman’s quilt “63 Suffragists of Color” will be displayed at Indiana University’s Grunwald Gallery in February. Coleman began by tracking down Indiana suffragists and by the time she reached 63, the women profiled included Native Americans, Latin Americans, and Asians, among others. Images of the quilt can be seen on Coleman’s Instagram page, @patriciaccolemanart.

Voter Service

Logistic Accuracy Test (LAT) of Monroe County Election Scanner

On November 4, 2020, Monroe County conducted a test of the scanner used for the 2020 general election. Election Central staff and Election Board Chair Hal Turner conducted the test assisted by Drew Stewart, representative of Hart InterCivic (the company that provided this scanner). Ralf Shaw observed on behalf of the League.

On Election Day 547 ballots were cast in person in Van Buren Precinct 6 and scanned on a scanner at the polling site. Every voter had reviewed and accepted the scanned image of his or her ballot. For the test, these ballots were extracted from the polling site container and both sides of each ballot were scanned on a Canon DRG-1100 scanner at Election Central. Approximately 15 ballots were flagged as requiring adjudication. These were all write-in choices for specific offices and were accepted by the operator.

The number of votes for each candidate was captured and compared with the Election Day report. The number of ballots counted and the number of votes for each candidate in each race were the same in the two reports.

The League appreciates this opportunity to observe the LAT. We strongly encourage the Election Board to consider conducting risk-limiting audits in the future to verify that votes reported match votes cast. — Ralf Shaw

Civics Education

Redistricting Proposals for Indiana Senate

Four Democrats in the Indiana Senate—Greg Taylor, Tim Lanane, J. D. Ford, and Shelli Yoder—expect to file legislation to reform the redistricting process. Taylor plans to re-introduce the bill he introduced last year. That measure would require districts to be as compact as possible, discourage the division of cities and counties between districts, discourage separate school corporation boundaries, prohibit district lines drawn to favor a particular party or person, and require that new maps conform to the Voting Rights Act. In addition, as proposed independently by Common Cause-Indiana and All IN for Democracy, Taylor’s bill would provide the public with
the wherewithal to draw and submit their own maps. According to Republican Senate President Pro Tempore Rodric Bray, the public will have access to computer terminals around the state where they can draw their own, but the Indiana constitution empowers the legislature to draw the official maps. —Jim & Tomi Allison

Climate Change

Calling Campaign for Carbon Pricing, Dec. 1 - 4

Volunteers from Citizens’ Climate Lobby will meet with Senator Young, Senator Braun, and Rep. Hollingsworth and/or their staff during the week of Dec. 7, to advocate for bipartisan carbon fee and dividend legislation in the new Congress.

You can increase the impact of this grass-roots advocacy for a fair and effective carbon-pricing bill by calling these three members of Congress sometime between Dec. 1 and Dec. 4. Here’s the link to get started. It provides phone numbers and sample scripts for supporting the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act.

Alternatively, you could refer to the LWVUS resolution that the League “should support a price on carbon emissions that will increase in stages, as part of an overall program to improve energy efficiency and to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy, fast enough to avoid serious damage to the climate system.”

We hope you will take this opportunity to advocate on behalf of the League’s 2020 call for prompt action on climate change. Please contact Kristina Lindborg for more information. — Kristina Lindborg
The League Letter

December 2020

League of Women Voters of Bloomington–Monroe County

LWV-BMC Member News

League Updates

Nominating Committee to Develop and Identify Leaders

The LWV-BMC Nominating Committee has begun the important work of looking at our leadership process with an eye toward the sustainability and diversity of our League. In the coming months we will be working in a two-fold fashion. We are planning to identify individuals who have expressed a desire to become more involved in the League and perhaps take a leadership role as well as looking at our process to mentor and develop leaders for the future. Anyone interested in a potential leadership position is welcome to contact the co-chairs of the committee, Annamaria Mecca or Josephine McCormick. — Annamaria Mecca

Member Meeting Covers 2020 Accomplishments; Current Projects

The member meeting held on November 16 had 27 members attending and one guest from LWVIN. Ann Birch discussed our League’s accomplishments this year. These are listed below (with the chance that a couple may have been missed…). Many thanks are due to the members and committees who made these happen!

Web manager Jenn Harmless then presented a demo of our transitional ClubExpress website and some of the functionality it affords. Elaine Gaul reported progress on the diversity, equity, and inclusion part of our 2020-2021 program, with Ralf Shaw, Diedre Todd, and Tracy Heaton de Martinez (from LWVIN) commenting. Josephine McCormick provided updates on both the Nominating Committee’s recruitment efforts and the development of a long-term plan for leadership. Ann Birch closed the program with progress on the administrative part of our 2020-2021 program, with leadership guidelines and committee handbooks under development.

Accomplishments (so far) in 2020

- Two in-person legislative update public events with area legislators in collaboration with the local chamber of commerce. The third event was cancelled due to COVID-19
- Collaboration with IU’s Jason Peifer on Making the News: A Community Conversation
- Ongoing development of DEI program
- Ongoing development of leadership guidelines, committee handbooks, and other “how-to” League materials
- Two virtual public screenings of voter suppression documentaries with Q&A
- A virtual public climate solutions forum with guest experts and lots of audience participation
- Development of webpages and materials on the centennial of the 19th Amendment and the League
- Collaboration with local history center on centennial activities
- Supporting voter registration by two church groups and a local social service group to participate in National Voter Registration Day
- Development of voter information flyers in English and Spanish and a special flyer for the homeless and evicted
- Preparation and distribution of 150 “Check Your Registration/Vote Early” yard signs
- Participation in vote411.org for the second year; this time using the platform to communicate with candidates
“Keys to the Candidates” published as a pullout section in the Bloomington Herald-Times and widely publicized, with special delivery to 50 senior citizen residences and extra copies available at local library branches

- Participation by invitation by the president and voter service co-chairs in more than eight community public events

- Collaboration with Indiana University’s Political and Civic Engagement program and the Big Ten Voting Challenge

- Numerous guest columns, letters, and press releases in local media

- League observers who covered 16 government entities

- Development of podcasts featured on WFHB radio

- Significant increase in Facebook presence with almost daily posts and an increase of 30% in followers

- Establishment of ClubExpress account and upload of membership

The minutes are available on the member portal.

**New Member Meetings Offered**

A reminder that virtual new member meetings are scheduled for Wednesday, December 2; Thursday, December 3; and Friday, December 4 from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. These meetings are designed primarily for new members but are open to all members. If you would like a refresher, please join us. The interaction is highly informative and there is always something new to learn. Please contact Kaye Hill by December 1 if you plan to participate.

**A Thank You from the U.S. Census Bureau**

We asked, you delivered and now we simply say, "Thank You."

We have reached another milestone in the U.S. Census Bureau as our 2020 Decennial count has come to an end, and we want you to know that we could not have made it without you. No words can truly convey what your sacrifices have meant as we, together, worked to achieve a complete and accurate count throughout the country.

Partners like you are the true trusted voices in the community, helping to raise awareness and spread the importance of counting everyone once, only once and in the right place.

We know it has not been an easy task, but because of your dedication and commitment to service, we have been able to tackle every challenge that has come our way, including natural disasters, social unrest and a global pandemic. Wow, what a journey.

Your contributions can positively impact your community's healthcare services, schools, senior centers, roadways, public transportation and public libraries over the next decade. These improvements can make a difference in the lives of so many Americans.

It is official. You are forever part of the team. We look forward to our continued service of the nation.

Thank you again for being part of this remarkable, historic 2020 Census.

*Note: Leaders of our League’s census efforts were Vickie Dacey and Annamaria Mecca.*
Communications

Help Needed: ClubExpress Transition
We have short-term projects where we need members comfortable working online and entering data. We have one volunteer but would like more. We’ll have instructions for volunteers; the time required just depends on how much you want to spend. Right now we have two areas identified: Adding government meetings to the calendar and uploading League photos and entering captions. — Ann Birch

Help Needed: Newsletter Writing Project
We’re looking for a member to write “For Your Information” articles for the newsletter once a month, usually three or four. You can look at past 2020 newsletters in the member portal to get an idea of the content. Time involved would be a couple of hours a month using League Facebook posts and alerts as source materials along with relevant news items. — Ann Birch

Observer Corps – City of Bloomington

Bloomington Environmental Commission
At the November 19 meeting Andrea Webster, from the I.U. Environmental Resilience Institute, updated the Commission on the Environmental Resilience Institute Toolkit (ERIT). Using data on over twenty different climate impact areas from the Purdue Climate Impact Assessment, ERIT users can zoom in on the impacts unique to their own community, thus enabling them to identify solutions tailored to their specific challenges. The toolkit can provide each community with an individualized readiness score. This profile helps them plan for targeted adaptation to climate change challenges such as flooding, public health, and negative economic effects.

The Commission also reviewed their environmental justice statement, which includes a call to look at urban development through the lens of environmental justice. The commission voted unanimously to adopt the statement, as well as to submit the statement in a letter to the editor of the Herald-Times.

Another major item on the agenda was a proposed zoning change which, if approved by the city council, would allow duplexes, triplexes, and four-plexes on the near West side. After discussion, the Bloomington Environmental Commission agreed to draft a statement for the city’s planning department, in support of the environmental benefits of such multi-unit residential structures.

The complete minutes are available online. — Kristina Lindborg

Farmers’ Market Advisory Council Meeting (FMAC)
Chair Cortland Carrington called the Nov. 16 meeting to order and opened a discussion of the 2021 Farmers’ Market vendor pricing schedule. Leslie Brinson noted that, at the October Park Board meeting, she had presented a proposal for a flat-fee increase, but had not offered Carrington’s counter-proposal for a proportional fee increase for the different-size spaces. Brinson explained this by saying there hadn’t been time to prepare the proportional proposal.
However, because most of the council strongly favor the proportional model, council member Janice Lilly prepared a comparison between the fixed-fee and proportional increases for the FMAC to review. The fixed fee would generate a 20% increase in revenue for the market and the proportional would generate 22%, with a much more equitable distribution of the fee-increase burden.

Brinson suggested that the council use these numbers to put together a proportional proposal for 2022. Representatives argued that they had been asked for proposal suggestions for this year, and that the proportional model made it easier for new vendors to enter the market and might also be an incentive for current vendors to stay. They then voted to draft a proportional fee increase proposal for presentation at the December Park Board meeting. Brinson agreed with the caveat that the council was advising the proportional model; the decision would still be up to the Park Board.

Brinson reviewed the recent Park Board work session where she had presented the 2020 cost recovery numbers (30%). The Board had discussed these along with the budget for 2021 and the hiring of a new market coordinator. When asked when the Board would vote on whether to continue the market, Brinson said that no official vote needs to be taken.

Brinson then summarized the results of the most recent vendor survey. Of the 80-100 vendors who received surveys, only 24 had replied. Of that 24, 70% expected to return to the Market in 2021, and 50% expected to be full-season vendors. One council member questioned the impact on cost recovery if only 12 out of 24 respondents are coming back full-time in 2021; another said that, at least anecdotally, everyone who sold at market this summer intended to come back.

Brinson asked that any proposed changes to the Vendor Handbook be given to her by mid-January. The sections in question deal with vendor behavior and expectations. Melanie McQuinn requested that the handbook have a written grievance policy and written expectations for enforcing it and said this addition is critical to her decision on whether to stay with the market. Leslie Brinson and Sarah Mullin agreed to contact other local markets to see how they deal with the grievance process.

Brinson mentioned that the position of market coordinator will be posted in January; she’ll send the job description out to the council members prior to posting. — Elaine Gaul

Observer Corps – Monroe County

Monroe County Community School Corporation Board of Trustees
The Nov. 17 meeting began with Dr. Mobley’s announcements for the Celebration of Success which included mention of Tara Ganguly, recipient of a Bloomington Commission on the Status of Children and Youth Swagger Award. Tara’s accomplishments included her 2017-2018 work with LWV-BMC on voter registration through the Monroe County Youth Council.

Mrs. Helm’s Foundation report stated that the Foundation has provided $48,500 in funding to MCCSC this year. She encouraged everyone to support the Reading, Writing and Bidding fundraising auction to be held from November 30 through December 9.
Dr. Demuth’s short report centered on the failure of the state legislature to pass a mandate requiring masks to be worn while on the state house floor. She encouraged everyone to contact their legislators to express their thoughts on that. Paul Farmer (Monroe County Education Association Union Representative) seconded this in his public comments, asking everyone to be aware that school funding is on the line this year and to contact their legislators on that as well as on COVID safety measures.

President Fuentes-Rohwer then read several emailed public comments, most of which requested that schools return to virtual learning until the COVID numbers improve. In later commentary, board member Sue Wanzer noted that the Board doesn’t hear from “the people who need us the most,” but more often from those with the time, knowledge, and ability to contact the Board and the administration.

Following Dr. Winston’s Information and Curriculum update, Dr. Mobley reviewed the MCCSC response to COVID, reiterating that it needs to be both centralized and consistent. She restated that statistically, schools are the safest place for children to be and reviewed the reasons for schools to stay open, including issues with food insecurity and child abuse. In response to a question from the Board she went over the steps taken in MCCSC’s very thorough contact tracing process, which is conducted by health professionals for consistency. Dr. Mobley stated that Monroe County has one of the lowest seven-day rolling averages in Indiana and that all current COVID data is posted on the MCCSC website.

Dr. Mobley also reported that when the Metrics Committee met earlier that day they determined that MCCSC schools would be in phase yellow on November 30th with elementary schools meeting in-person five days a week and secondary schools going to a hybrid system. Dr. DeMuth added that although the Metrics Committee meets weekly, the COVID data is monitored daily, if not hourly, and parents have been notified to expect sudden changes.

When asked about schools in other areas closing, Dr. DeMuth replied that other areas may be having worse spikes or may have lost more staff. If another district doesn’t have the staff to do stringent contact tracing or the space for sufficient social distancing, they may be forced to err on the side of caution and close.

The Board selected Jacinda Townsend Gides, Martha Street, and Keith Klein as its nominating committee for next year’s officers.

Legal counsel Tom Bunger presented a request that MCCSC join a lawsuit being brought by 10 states against Juul Corporation, an e-cigarette company. The suit would be no-cost, no-risk for MCCSC and, if decided in their favor, would reimburse them for previous costs of educating students on the risks of vaping as well as pay the cost of future educational efforts. The Board agreed to put the item on next month’s agenda.

President Fuentes-Rohwer adjourned the meeting at 8:19. The next MCCSC Board meeting will be held on December 15. — Elaine Gaul

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LWV-BMC Leadership

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 advocacy and education.

2020-2021 Leadership

League members are welcome to attend any board meeting or suggest agenda topics. Board meetings will be held by videoconference on the second Monday of each month through the end of 2020 from 6:30 pm–8:00 pm. Contact Ann Birch if you wish to attend. An agenda will be available on the member portal several days before each meeting.

OFFICERS
President (2021): Ann Birch; 989-430-4075
Vice President pro tem (2021): Doris Wittenburg
Secretary (2021): Nancy Boerner
Treasurer (2022): Carol McGregor

DIRECTORS
Director (2022): Richard Durisen
Director (2022): George Hegeman
Director (2021): Annamaria Mecca
Director (2021): Diedre Todd

Director (2021): Elaine Amerson

STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Membership: Kaye Hill
Program: Vickie Dacey; Elaine Gaul
Voter Service: Ralf Shaw; Mary Ann Williams
Communications: Ann Birch
Civics Education (interim): Elaine Gaul

OTHER LEADERS
Budget: George Hegeman
City-County Land Use: Jim Faber
Climate Change: Albrecht Holschuh
Facebook: Becky Hill
Historian: Patty Callison
2020 Commemoration: Ann Birch
Newsletter: Ralf Shaw
Nominating: Josephine McCormick; Annamaria Mecca
Observer Corps: Diedre Todd
Publicity: Nancy Boerner
Website: Jenn Harmless

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