



LWV LEHIGH COUNTY VOTER

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

February

Thurs 4		Deadline for !Hot Topics! lunch reservations
Thurs 18	4:00 p.m.	Board Meeting, Sunrise Assisted Living
Mon 8	Noon	!Hot Topics! Lunch, Marcellus Shale, Tracy Carluccio, Speaker

March

4 Thurs		Deadline for reservations for !Hot Topics! Lunch
8 Mon	Noon	!Hot Topics! Lunch
14 Thurs	4:00 P.m.	Board Meeting, Sunrise Assisted Living

April

9 Thurs		Deadline for reservations for !Hot Topics! Lunch
12 Mon	Noon	!Hot Topics! Lunch
8	4:00 P.m.	Board Meeting, Sunrise Assisted Living

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear League Friends,

Happy 90th Birthday to the League of Women Voters, and congratulations to all of the dedicated women who have made this great organization an important part of the political process.

Democracy is a challenging form of government and the members of the League have contributed to the efficacy of the political process at the local, state and national levels. Candidates' debates and events that are based on fair practices are conducted throughout the United States during our elections, in contrast to the news we receive about elections in many other parts of the world. This fact is due in large part to the League's efforts to es-

tablish issue-based candidates' events. The debate format piloted by the League in national debates has become a model for fair public speaking between candidates for government office.

Although this achievement by itself is noteworthy, the League of Women Voters did not stop there. We have studied the issues facing our nation and communities, and conducted discussions across the nation to formulate opinions which are regularly consulted by citizens, candidates and members of the press. The League has created "How to Run for Office" workshops to empower people to run for positions in their government. League members have hosted countless public forums on issues

relevant to the public's needs, written biennial *Voters Guides*, *Government Directories*, and published research about hundreds of public concerns. We have been a consistent voice for freedom, for the rights of voters to fair election practices, and for the disclosure of true and accurate information to our fellow citizens.

It is with great pride that I take this opportunity to congratulate members of the League of Women Voters for their profound contribution to the American Democratic process.

See you at the next League event!

Mary Anne Rood
President, LWVLC

GOT IDEAS YOU WANT TO SHARE?

Please feel free to send short articles about issues you find interesting and events that you have attended. We may be able to publish some of them and inform your League friends.

ber. We will be happy to discuss your plans and ideas.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Mary Anne Rood

If you are interested in participating in a League portfolio, activity or joining the Board, please contact any board mem-

NEWS FROM THE BOARD—

Present: Bartholomew, Dunn, Hoffman, Rood, Williams, Swan
Absent: Shoenthal, Seaman

Call to order: 4:00, Adjourned: 5:45

Minutes: Secretary absent; to be approved at the next meeting.

Announcements/Mail: Rood reported National needs our membership count by January 31st for the PMP.

Committee/Portfolio Reports

Action: Members received e-mails on Health Care. Swan will contact the Northampton League about sending a letter to the Morning Call in support of a regional health department.

Government Directory: Bartholomew reported members are sending information for the 2010 issue.

Membership: Dunn reported the second notice letters for membership renewal were sent out. The dead line is January 31

Program: Swan reported that Tracy Carluccio will be the February speaker on Delaware River keepers.

Voter: Board will ask Renew Lehigh Valley if they would submit articles. In her president's message, Rood will ask members to submit articles regarding any activities or meetings they attended.

OLD BUSINESS

Hot Topics Luncheon: Members will consider the Brew Works at the Municipal Golf Course as a new meeting place.

Health Care Forum: Information on the forum will be on our website.

NEW BUSINESS

Government Directory: Bartholomew reviewed the information still needed for the new edition.

Marcellus Shale Update: Contact information will be sent to Barbara Benson for Green Coalition.

Action position: Stinner declined the position but will stay active. Rood will submit article in Voter for the need for another Board member.

Legislative Interview Question: Board members volunteered to visit legislators. Rood will call a few members to e-mail or visit remaining local legislators.

Next Meeting: February 18, 2010 at Sunrise Assisted Living, Allentown

Margie Dunn
Acting Secretary

!HOT TOPICS! CALENDAR—MARCELLUS SHALE

Marcellus Shale Matters Speaker, Tracy Carluccio

CHANGE OF LOCATION and TIME Allentown Brew Works

Take the elevator to the High Gravity Room on the second level.

812 West Hamilton
Monday, February 8
11:45 a.m.

Learn all about drilling for natural gas in Pennsylvania. We need jobs. We want cheap energy. But at what cost?

Our speaker, Tracy Carluccio, is Deputy Director of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. She is lead staff person working on the impacts of shale gas development on the

Delaware River Watershed. She was appointed to the Highlands Regional Water Protection and Planning Council by the governor of New Jersey and has written and presented papers at scientific conferences. Her information and insights will enhance our consensus study on this complex issue!

Ms. Carluccio will talk all about natural gas drilling in Pennsylvania. This is a really HOT TOPIC as environmental concerns collide with economic initiatives.

Make reservations for !Hot Topics! lunch no later than Thursday, February 4. Call Sue Phillips at 610 821-1118, or e-mail her at <suep@entermail.net>. The cost is \$12.00.

Reminder: Bring a new or gently used book for Cops and Kids We will have a buffet of delicious chicken and veggie wraps, coleslaw and beverage. There is ample space. Come and encourage your friends to attend this special "Hot Topic."

Parking: The Farr Lot is the closest and is entered from 8th Street just north of Hamilton. The Spiral Deck is also close by and is entered from Linden street between 8th and 9th. Rates are \$1 per hour. More information is available at the Allentown Parking Authority website, or call 610 437-3366. Carpool if you can.

If you have concerns about driving or parking, call Pat Swan 610-435-4148.

Pat Swan

!HOT TOPICS! LUNCHEON—JANUARY 2010

H1N1 Vaccine Vicky Kistler, Director City of Allentown Health Bureau

Vicky Kistler spoke about the H1N1 (swine flu virus) vaccine and the political ramifications and implications of the recent vaccination program for a regional health bureau. In 2007, no one knew what to expect. If there was a pandemic on the horizon, most assumed it would be some form of avian influenza. Instead the swine flu – H1N1 – burst on the scene.

The seasonal flu virus thrives in cold weather. Vaccines are developed from the findings of samples taken by physicians in the previous year. So this year's vaccine is based on last year's diagnosis. H1N1 was a mystery and it hit unexpectedly. When the flu began to spread, there was no

vaccine for it. Local pharmaceutical companies flew into double production to make two vaccines – the seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu vaccines

The new seasonal flu vaccines were sent as usual to the Walgreen's, IGAs, King's, and other outlets who typically offer the vaccine, but the H1N1 vaccines were sent to the Center for Disease Control for them to distribute. The first groups to get the vaccine were to be children, caretakers of children, college age students, and ultimately the task of distributing the vaccines fell to Public Health. Pennsylvania ranks 50th (behind Alaska) of all the states in terms of its public health services.

11,000 doses arrived in the lobby of Alliance Hall, the City of Allentown's Public Health office building, so several clinics had to be held at various

facilities for the most vulnerable at the groups.

Kistler said if there were a true health emergency that affected everyone in the Lehigh Valley, nine such clinics would have to be run simultaneously to manage the size of the population. "The concept of regional public health took on new meaning" for those involved in these clinics., she said, and there is movement towards a regional public health facility. Kistler also mentioned that the Lehigh Valley needs citizens for a volunteer corps. She took several questions and also urged those who are over 60 and therefore not in the prime group for H1N1 to get the vaccine anyway if they can, especially if they are around young children.

Elizabeth Bodien
January 2010

MARCELLUS SHALE

The Marcellus Shale is a natural gas formation about a mile below the surface of the ground. It runs under two-thirds of Pennsylvania. Natural gas is a comparatively clean fuel, but the extraction process has a significant impact on our resources and the economy.

The process of extracting the gas is called "fracking." Huge amounts of water, chemicals, and sand are forced into the rock formation which "fractures" the rock and allows the gas to be released. However, in fracking much of the wastewater and chemicals are returned to the surface causing serious environmental pollution; especially contaminated water and airborne emissions. The source of water needed for fracking is a major problem as 2 million gallons are needed per fracture. Fracking is

sometimes combined with horizontal drilling.

The other side of this picture is the economic benefit to Pennsylvania. At a recent meeting of the Citizens Advisory Council of DEP in Harrisburg, a severance tax to offset costs was recommended. This tax is already in place in other states and is used mainly to restore and preserve the natural environment; however, the bulk of Pennsylvania's severance tax is slated to go into the General Fund. It was also suggested that more of our state forests be leased to generate needed revenue. The amount of state forest land to be leased would possibly be a third of all Pennsylvania forests. Four or five acres of land are needed for each well. In addition, roads must be constructed for heavy truck traffic, and transmission lines

must be built to carry the gas to interstate pipes. Over 1,000 wells are projected to be built in the state forests.

At another public meeting held in the Lehigh County Government Center in Allentown, only two entities were against stricter laws and controls for the permitting processes during the 5 1/2 hour public input meeting. Both of these corporations would benefit from drilling.

Drilling for gas in the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania is inherently problematic and revolves around the scope and content of the regulations and the creation, enforcement and accountability of those regulations.

Mary Anne Stinner

LWV – LC & NC SUPPORT CREATION OF A REGIONAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

On December 3, 2009, LWV-LC with RenewLV, sponsored a community forum on the proposed Regional Health Department. The night was stormy and dark but still, a few intrepid citizens came to hear a positive presentation from members of the Lehigh Valley Board of Health planning team. Maryanne Rood, Jeanette Seaman and Ann Bartholomew, who moderated the panel, represented our League. The speakers were Dr. David Lyon, Vice President for Medical and Academic Affairs at Easton Hospital, Dr. Carol Mest, the Director of the Master of Science in Nursing Programs at DeSales University and a certified adult nurse practitioner, Ilene Prokup, a cancer epidemiologist and associate professor of nursing at Kutztown University, and Gerry Barron, the public health consultant for the Lehigh Valley Board of Health.

The theme, "Public Health is for everyone everywhere," reverberated throughout the presentations. This bi-county board expects the planning phase to be completed early in 2010. The plan and budget will then be subject to approval by the PA Department of Health, both counties, and local municipalities. If approved, the newly created Lehigh Valley Health Depart-

ment would be the first bi-county health department in Pennsylvania. LWV-NC will sponsor another forum on Tuesday December 15. These forums are efforts to both educate and involve the public in supporting this initiative to form a Lehigh Valley Health Bureau.

Benefits of a Regional Health Department:

- Spread public health services beyond Bethlehem and Allentown to municipalities across the Lehigh Valley which are now covered by fragmented services from state agencies.
- Public health services for all will include an impressive list of both personal and environmental health issues.
- Coordination of prevention efforts for health and natural disasters will cross jurisdictional lines in a coordinated and speedier fashion.
- Additional state health funds, up to \$4.7 million, can be accessed if a public health department is adopted for Lehigh Valley.
- Jobs will be created as the central and satellite offices are established.

Funding:

A complex combination of funds from many sources will be used. State funds from Act 315 and Act 12, along with grants from the PA Dept of Health and a local match of \$2,750,000, will support the bureau. It is anticipated that the local match will come from area partners such as local hospitals, health providers, foundations, and local government. Many of these local partners are already contributing to the public health costs of the Valley. It is expected that there will be very little or no additional cost to individual taxpayers.

What is needed from LWV-LC & NC?

- Find out more at www.healthyvalley.org or www.renewlv.org/health.
- Talk to neighbors and friends to provide information and gain support.
- Express your support to County Government representatives now and often.

Jan Seaman

!HOT TOPICS! - DECEMBER 2009

State of the County
Don Cunningham
County Executive of Lehigh County

Don Cunningham took office as County Executive on January 3, 2006, the first Democrat to hold that office, and was re-elected to serve a second term in January 2010. The biggest capital project since he took office has been the renovation of the County Court-

house to be dedicated officially in February 2010. The renovation has added 60,000 square feet, including new courtrooms and better security with increased emergency training.

The 911 center that had been in the basement of the courthouse was moved to two renovated floors in the Hamilton Financial Center with the Emergency Management

Office. Seventy percent of every county tax dollar goes to criminal justice. Other big county projects include programs for children and youth, mental retardation, senior services, and other social work. He described his own job as like that of a CEO of a large company. The county employs 2,200 full-time people and many part-time people. The property tax rate has remained the same at 10.25 mils. The county is

(Continued on page 5)

BI-COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING

The Lehigh County board of commissioners met with their counterparts from Northampton County on January 11 to learn about progress to date by the bi-county Board of Health in setting up the parameters for a bi-county health department.

Most of the discussion was focused on costs, specifically the cost to taxpayers, and very little on the value of a health department. No firm answers were provided. It was clear early in the discussion that some of the newly elected commissioners and council members had not had an opportunity to learn what public health encompasses, and were even unsure about the responsibilities of county government.

In the Lehigh Valley, only the cities of Allentown and Bethlehem have departments of health. The proposed Lehigh County and Northampton County joint department would be the first regional department in the state.

The League of Women Voters has supported the creation of a county health department for many years, and has supported a bi-county department since that idea was introduced. Among the benefits are regional approaches to disease prevention, inspections of facilities used by the public, environmental hazards such as water and air pollution, health education, and rapid response to health emergencies. Most of the costs are expected to be covered by financial and in-kind donations by local hospitals, corporations and foundations. The counties will become eligible for state funds once a health department is established. The impact on county taxpayers should be made clear in April, when the Board of Health is scheduled to present a budget for the bi-county health department to the counties.

Pennsylvania county government is charged with providing for the health and welfare of citizens. Here is how

the Pennsylvania Manual describes the functions of county government:

Counties continue to serve in their traditional role as agents of the state for law enforcement, judicial administration and the conduct of elections. The county is also responsible for the property assessment function. Counties become involved in regional planning, solid waste disposal and public health. They perform welfare functions, including mental health. Counties also can establish housing and redevelopment authorities and conduct community development programs. Counties maintain hospitals and homes for the aged. Counties may support local libraries and community colleges.

For more information, go to www.healthyvalley.org/ and www.renewlv.org/

Ann Bartholomew

!HOT TOPICS! - DECEMBER 2009 *(Continued from Page 4)*

property-tax-dependent so, in the current economy, spending has been kept tight.

When Cunningham became County Executive, of the 40 bridges in the county, two-thirds were deficient and 5 were closed or restricted. 22 bridges have been repaired and others are due to open soon. \$15M-\$18M has been earmarked for a Green Futures Fund. \$12M has already been spent, mostly on farms and parks. Lehigh County is now a leader in the state in terms of the number of preserved farms. The county runs a farm in Lower Milford to teach farming methods. New county investment has also gone to the Trexler Nature Preserve,

some towards opening public trails in 1,100 acres of passive recreational land and wheelchair fishing spots along Jordan Creek. Cunningham mentioned the new Autism Resource Community Hub (ARCH), which was begun with the help of a devoted parents group.

Money has been directed to hire more community police officers. A new Crime Data Center is being built to facilitate sharing of information about criminals in other communities. Finally, he spoke about bringing the 25 municipalities in the county together to form the Congress of Government to cooperate on regional problems. "A problem in one community is a problem for

all," Cunningham explained.

In response to a question, Cunningham promised to look into the whether the big bucket of soil from each of the 25 municipalities placed under the map at the courthouse would remain after the renovation?

Another question concerned a 1% sales tax increase. Cunningham said a regional tax must be approved by the Governor and the General Assembly, and would have to be enacted by several counties at once – Lehigh, Northampton, Berks – to counter objections from

(Continued on page 6)

League of Women Voters
of Lehigh County

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We're on the Web!
www.lwvlv.org



!HOT TOPICS! - DECEMBER 2009

(Continued from page 5)

business owners who might find they have to compete from a more highly taxed county. He said there is merit to the idea and it was going well recently.

Cunningham was asked: Why did he go into politics, why do most politicians go into politics, and why **should** people go into politics? He said he got into politics because of his concern over changes in the local economy with the closing of Bethlehem Steel, so he went door to door asking for people to support him to be on the Bethlehem City Council. He said people should go into politics because they care about something local, but there are people who go into politics and then like the pay, etc., and don't want to give that up. He called this "the disease of politics." He said that is why he favors term limits. He said that at this point he is not interested in running for governor because of the time it takes away from his family.

In response to a question about Cunningham's stated commitment to having an environmentalist on the county water board, he declined to talk about specific people. However, he did say that were environmental people, business people, and engineers, should be represented on the board; and that he would consider anyone who sends a resume to him. The Congress of Governments, started by Cunningham in his first year of office, is focusing on smart growth and land use. That group has created some template ordinances for the purpose of changing zoning for an area that planning commissions and the Wildlands Conservancy deem important to protect.

He thanked the League of Women Voters, having noted earlier that for all his time in office he has been involved with the League.

Elizabeth Bodien

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Our membership renewal drive is now over. The official count will be sent in on January 31st to LWVUS. I would like to thank everyone for their speedy renewal and the generous extra contributions to our Education Fund that some of you

sent. The Education Fund is used to print the Government Directory and educational programs we sponsor throughout the year.

Margie Dunn

ADVERTISING RATES

Advertising Rates for 2009 for *The Lehigh County Voter* are as follows:

Business Card Size - \$75 a year
Full page - \$100 for 1 month, \$500 for a year
Half Page - \$50 for 1 month, \$250 for a year.

Advertisers' web links will be publicized in *The Voter*, both on-line and in hard copy. The ad year runs from July 1 to June 30. The rate for advertisers whose ads are received during the year will be pro-rated. Contact Gayle Getz at 610-398-9837, the *Voter* editor, or any board member for additional information or to arrange your advertising.

WHEN PATRONIZING OUR SPONSORS, PLEASE REMEMBER TO
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Allentown PA 18106



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

Name _____

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City, State, Zip _____

Phone, E-mail _____

Membership dues include membership in the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) and a subscription to the local, state and national *Voter*.

League dues and contributions are not tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

Contributions to the LWV Education Fund (LWVEF) are tax-deductible.

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to all citizens of voting age. Associate membership is available for non-citizens and for those under age eighteen.

ANNUAL DUES	\$55.00 individual
2009-2010	\$82.50 household
	\$25.00 full-time student

Contact membership secretary for details of pro-rated dues amounts.

Please make check payable to
LWVLC and mail to:
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