



Summary of Activities 2019-2020

Document Date: 2020-08-19

This summary covers the League year running from July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020. For current information, you can check out the home page (<https://www.lwv-bmc.org>). Note that when this document is viewed in the future, links may no longer be viable.

Table of Contents

Leadership	2
Board of Directors	2
Standing Committees	2
Other Committees/Positions.....	2
Board and Committee Reports	3
From the President.....	3
Board of Directors	3
Membership	4
Program	5
Civics Education.....	6
Voter Service	6
Communications	7
Natural Resources	7
Redistricting Reform.....	8
Observer Corps.....	9
Climate Change Unit.....	9

Leadership

The list below includes members who served as leaders from July 1, 2019 through August 13, 2020. In a typical year, terms would end on June 30. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual meeting and therefore the election was held two months later than usual.

Board of Directors

President: Ann Birch

Vice President *pro tem*: Susan Glowacz

Secretary: Nancy Boerner

Treasurer: Carol McGregor

Directors

Elaine Amerson

Anne Fraker

Susan Glowacz

George Hegeman

Chaz Mottinger

Diedre Todd

Standing Committees

Program Co-chairs: Vickie Dacey, Elaine Gaul

Membership Chair: Kaye Hill

Voter Service Co-chairs: Ralf Shaw and Mary Ann Williams

Civics Education Committee Chair: Elaine Gaul

Communications Committee Chair: Ann Birch

Other Committees/Positions

Natural Resources (special) Committee Chair: Dave Simcox

Plan Committee Chair: Jim Faber

Redistricting Reform (special) Committee Chair: Tomi Allison

Climate Change Unit Leader: Albrecht Holschuh

Observer Corps Coordinator: Diedre Todd

Budget Committee Chair: George Hegeman

Nominating Committee Chair: Diedre Todd

Facebook Administrators: Elaine Amerson and Becky Hill

Historian: Patty Callison

Newsletter Editor: Ralf Shaw

Publicity: Nancy Boerner

Twitter Administrator: Becky Hill

Website Manager: Jenn Harmless

Board and Committee Reports

From the President...

I have to say it. “This has been some year.” During the last half of 2019 and into the first quarter of 2020, our League, like the rest of the world, was sailing along. Already busy with preparations for what was anticipated to be a complicated and challenging election year, we were also gearing up for the 2020 commemoration of the passage of the 19th Amendment and of the League itself. The reports that follow testify to all the outreach that was accomplished and planned for. Then, COVID-19 happened. I’m sure the League has operated through national crises before but probably not with such a total shutdown across the country, not to mention the strain that all citizens have been under. Of course, our presence and visibility during the first half of 2020 were greatly diminished, compared to what had been planned. However, our work did not stop.

The pandemic presented many challenges to an organization used to working directly with the public. But as is often true, these challenges were also opportunities. How could we use the learning and reimagining that began in March to become a better League? This question becomes even more important when we consider the response to racial injustice that occurred in cities large and small across the country. Although we had seen many instances before of injustice with the accompanying anger and reaction, this felt different. This *was* and *is* different. As an organization generally considered benevolent, the League could have relaxed and said, “This doesn’t apply to us. We’re here for all people.” Well, unfortunately, our history shows that that has not always been true. The research done for the 2020 commemoration of the 19th Amendment has made that very clear.

So, what do we do? Well, for one, we should support and join to our best ability those who are fighting for equality and inclusion. Recently, an African American man, when asked a question about what primarily white socially and politically benevolent organizations should do, said, “Don’t be selfish with your struggle.” An African American woman, who is a member of an Indiana League, put it more bluntly, “Racial injustice permeates everything. If you want to be inclusive, that needs to be your first consideration.”

We’re in for some soul-searching. How do we make the next 100 years different? We’re on track toward a goal of diversity, inclusion, and equity in our outreach, which will hopefully be reflected in our membership. It’s not going to be easy or quick. It’s going to take building relationships with many different communities and organizations. And, despite the capabilities and dedication of League committees and leaders, that’s not going to be enough. It’s going to take every member of the League saying, “Let’s do it.”

— Ann Birch, president (president1@lwv-bmc.org)

Board of Directors

Eleven regular board meetings were held in 2019-2020 (nine are required by the bylaws) and five electronic (e-mail) meetings. Board meetings were held on the second Monday of the month, from 6:30-8:00 pm at Bell Trace in Bloomington through February. Once Bell Trace closed to visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, board meetings were held by Zoom videoconferencing. Four membership meetings were held, plus the annual meeting (three including the annual meeting are required by the bylaws). Member meetings were typically held at St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Bloomington. The membership planning meeting was held in May as a videoconference. Because of constraints caused by the pandemic and the need to develop new meeting processes, the planning meeting and the annual meeting were scheduled two months later than usual.

In 2019, in addition to regular tasks, the board continued with a major project to document board positions and create an expanded board handbook, which will help with future transitions and with recruiting members

for leadership positions. In 2020, the board took on the even-year task of reviewing and updating the LWV-BMC policies and procedures, which we hope to complete by the end of 2020. — *Ann Birch, president* (president1@lww-bmc.org)

Membership

League membership on January 31, 2020, when the national roster was updated, was 107. This includes 10 new members, 8 fifty-year members, and 2 student members. In February 2020 we began receiving new members for the 2020-2021 membership, after the board approved a change in policy allowing new members to join beginning February 1 for the next fiscal year without requiring dues for a partial year. Ten new members joined after January 31 and before May 31, including two high school students, bringing the number of student members to four.

In February, a reception for potential new members was held at the home of Annamaria Mecca and was well received. This is a format that we hope to use more in the future with current members hosting potential new members. Virtual new member receptions were offered on May 19 and 21, 2020 with four new members in attendance. We are so glad that these new members are already becoming actively involved.

Bertina Rudman, a 50-year member, died on March 21, 2020. Bert joined the League in the 1960s and remained active for many years, holding every job on the local board except treasurer. She was also a very generous donor to our League.

Nancy Boerner was recognized as our most recent 50-year member in the June 2020 newsletter. Nancy currently serves as secretary and oversees publicity for the local League. Below is our current list of 50-year members:

Mary Alice Bent
Nancy Boerner
Kathy Dilcher

Marge Faber
Mary Alice Gajewski
Judy Granbois

Harriet Pfister
Patty Pizzo

In November, instead of the usual member work meeting, we had a pitch-in dinner at St. Thomas Lutheran Church. Everyone in attendance brought a dish to share. Drinks were provided by the League and tableware was provided by St. Thomas. It was a fun evening of good food and conversation. We are looking forward to scheduling more of these when we can meet in person.

The 2020 LWV entry in the local 4th of July Parade, “A Celebration of 100 Years of a Women’s Right to Vote,” was to be a celebration of the centennials of the League and passage of the 19th Amendment. This was to be a riding and walking entry. It was planned that interested 50-year members dressed as suffragists would be seated on the riding entry. It was disappointing that the parade was canceled for 2020 due to the pandemic.

Goals for 2020-2021 include a) being more efficient in finalizing membership renewals for the coming year closer to the actual year-end of June 30, b) offering more social gatherings such as the November 2019 pitch-in event, c) offering receptions with current members (sponsors) and potential new members, and d) working to broaden the number and diversity of active members. — *Kaye Hill, chair* (members1@lww-bmc.org)

Program

During 2019-2020, the Program Committee worked with other League committees on activities that are conducted primarily for outreach purposes, such as the county fair and 4th of July parade, and tabling events not specifically managed by another standing committee. The committee also supports and oversees LWV-BMC collaborations with other nonpartisan groups/organizations and works across committees to ensure implementation of the member-approved League program.

League volunteers marched in the 2019 4th of July parade and staffed a booth at the 2019 Monroe County Fair (July). At these events, League volunteers chatted with friends and visitors, distributed League literature, solicited petition signatures, signed up new members or registered nonmembers for *The League Letter*, and answered questions about voter registration. The committee also supported tabling at several new events, including a presentation by Vote by Mail Indiana, PRIDE Fest 2019, and a panel discussion on criminal justice in Monroe County.

Additional accomplishments included new and continued collaborations with other organizations. Local community radio station WFHB aired a rebroadcast of *The League Story* to commemorate Women's Equality Day (August 26). To fulfill our commitment to the Friends of Lake Monroe, committee members worked closely with the Natural Resources Committee to support two community forums about water quality conditions at Lake Monroe. Two LWV-BMC members joined Bloomington's Complete Count Committee to work on the 2020 U.S. Census and developed contacts with the faith community and with programs working with young children (aged 0-5 years). Our collaboration with the NAACP was extended to include joint work on the census and on voter registration training through the Monroe County Voter Registration office.

Several planned collaborations were postponed or cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These efforts included the Women's History Month luncheon (March), a program about voter suppression with Monroe County Public Library's (MCPL) Summit program and Bloomington PRIDE (March), booth space for the annual Bloomington Street Fair (May), and the MCPL Readers for Change book club (April). A climate solutions forum was planned for the spring of 2020, initiated by the Climate Change Unit, but was also postponed.

The centennial program, overseen by the Program Committee, was established to support countywide activities in 2020 related to the centennial of the passage of the 19th amendment. This was an opportunity not only to recognize this important national milestone for all citizens, but also to educate the public about voter rights and voting issues. In addition, 2020 is the centennial for the League of Women Voters, giving us further opportunities to publicize our activities and take some time to commemorate.

A special section of the website was set aside and developed for community resources about the 19th Amendment and the women's suffrage movement. We also included historical information about the League. Topics for the 19th Amendment/suffrage include a timeline, online histories, books and articles, films, and videos. A quilt challenge was set up with the Bloomington Quilters Guild for best quilt commemorating the amendment or suffrage, with a \$100 prize. The quilt judging will take place in October 2020. Also, League member and historian Patty Callison put together a great overview of League history that was displayed at City Hall during the month of February.

A guest column was published in a January issue of the *Bloomington Herald-Times*, coauthored by Ann Birch, LWV-BMC president, and Lisa-Marie Napoli of IU's Political Action and Civic Engagement program, telling of the 19th Amendment and what it means for all citizens. A letter to the editor was also published near the February 14 date of the League centennial.

The president's letter for most newsletters in 2020 centered on people and events surrounding the 19th Amendment, several times highlighting people who up until now have received little attention. An article in each issue of the newsletter gave events in the area and around the state related to suffrage. A special calendar was developed to include not only League activities but any activities taking place in Indiana. Special articles for the month of August are planned for local media, with the official date of passage of the amendment being August 18, 2020.

In 2020-2021, members of the Program Committee plan to embrace LWVUS's emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), expanding collaboration with other nonpartisan groups across Bloomington and Monroe County. The committee has applied for and received funding for this effort through LWVUS. — *Vickie Dacey, co-chair* (program1@lwv-bmc.org); *Elaine Gaul, co-chair* (program2@lwv-bmc.org)

Civics Education

Summary: Our primary focus for the year was “Making the News: A Community Conversation,” a collaborative program with Jason Peifer, Assistant Professor, IU Media School. The program (February 29, 2020) was aimed at elucidating the role of media in a democracy. A recorded version of the day's activities will be used to create a template for others to follow in hosting their own community conversations.

Our newest member, Becky Hill, took over leadership of the podcast project and arranged with WFHB to air eight installments featuring various civics-related topics and interviews. Becky will follow up with this when circumstances permit. Partnering with the MCPL's Elizabeth Gray, Becky also initiated the Reading for Change book club which had been scheduled to start on April 12. When the club can meet, MCPL will provide the room, refreshments, and publicity; Becky will provide the topics and the book lists.

The committee developed a proposal that the LWV-BMC sponsor an award to honor local civics champions—community members who accomplish notable civic endeavors. The proposal is ready to go before the board for approval.

Goals: As LWV-BMC has already received a \$200 grant to promote awareness about redistricting/voter suppression, our first endeavor will be working with members of the Voter Service Committee to present a virtual screening of two documentaries: *UnCivil War* and *Suppressed: The Fight to Vote*. Our proposed timeframe for this is September.

An over-arching concern for us, of course, will be how to move forward as a virtual committee for the foreseeable future. We are working on creating podcasts-by-phone and considering the idea of holding book club meetings via Zoom. Based on our collaborative effort with Jason Peifer, we also intend to create a template for other leagues to use in putting together their own version of *Making the News*. The template would include a recording of the program as well as a written how-to manual that the CivEd committee would develop. Pending board approval, we will begin selecting nominees for the Civics Champion award. — *Elaine Gaul, chair* (cived1@lwv-bmc.org)

Voter Service

Voter Registration assists and encourages eligible citizens to register to vote. The “usual” approach has been registration tables at as many civic and community functions as VS personnel could cover. This year the committee has focused on building and leveraging connections with other organizations, in the hope that both

registration and voting will be more comfortable for new voters if they are approached by their peers and friends. Efforts included direct contact with the First Christian Church and an email “blast” to about 400 local civic groups.

Voter Information helps voters learn the views of their elected officials and candidates for office. This year we and the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce co-hosted two legislative updates. Senator Stoops and Representatives Ellington, Mayfield, and Pierce attended both sessions, with audiences of 50 and 45. The planned March update was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee plans to use VOTE411 to collect candidates’ responses for “Keys to the Candidates” for the general election; we used the system before the primary election to provide the names of candidates and links to information about them—their websites, Facebook pages, and the Chamber’s “Guide to the Candidates.” — *Ralf Shaw, co-chair* (voterserv1@lww-bmc.org); *Mary Ann Williams, co-chair* (voterserv2@lww-bmc.org)

Communications

The Communications Committee handles all communications for the local League, as well as most documentation and IT concerns. Nancy Boerner takes care of communications with local press, radio, and TV. Elaine Amerson and Becky Hill are administrators of our Facebook site, and our Twitter account has been recently resurrected with Becky Hill as administrator. Ralf Shaw is the newsletter compiler and editor, and Kristina Lindborg is reviewer. Jenn Harmless is the website manager. Ann Birch manages various technical apps used by the League, the Google drive and calendar, documentation, and general IT concerns.

Newspaper publicity through the year included two guest columns, two letters to the editor, and four articles. About eight items were submitted to the *Herald-Times* “Out & About” section along with the same number of entries to the WFIU/WTIU calendar. Five press releases were submitted.

Specific accomplishments include:

- Publicity: Addition of the *Bloomingtonian* and *B Square Beacon* to our list of local media.
- Facebook and Twitter: Establishment of routine postings and beginning the development of guidelines.
- Newsletter: Increased emphasis on communicating with the public, dividing the newsletter into first a section focused on the public and a second section focused on League news. The newsletter is sent to 106 members and 66 nonmember subscribers. The mid-month email update is sent only to members.
- Website: Centennial pages were added, as well as pages for civics education, natural resources, and the Officials List. Previously separate calendars for public and League events were combined into one Google calendar, which was embedded on the home page.

New apps being used include Canva design, Unsplash photos, Flickr photos, Doodle polling, and Zoom videoconferencing. A new member card and a centennial-themed League bookmark were designed and printed. — *Ann Birch, chair* (communica1@lww-bmc.org)

Natural Resources

The Natural Resources Committee was formed as a special committee in response to several initiatives approved by the LWV-BMC membership in May 2018 involving Lake Monroe and our state forests. In August 2108 we were approached by the Friends of Lake Monroe (FLM) asking if our League would donate volunteer time in support of their Section 319 Watershed Management Grant Application to the Indiana Dept. of Environmental Management (IDEM). The League’s Board of Directors approved a commitment of 200 hours of volunteer time towards helping organize and run their stakeholder meetings tentatively scheduled for the 4Q

2019 and subject to approval of their grant application. The grant was awarded and two stakeholder meetings (community forums) were held in collaboration with FLM and the Brown County League, one in Bloomington on November 14, 2019 and one in Nashville (Brown County) on January 14, 2020. Both were very successful at gaining input from stakeholders and the community, and our League fulfilled its commitment for 200 hours of volunteer time.

Since the state forest issue is a statewide concern, the League of Women Voters of Indiana encouraged the preparation of an educational and informational white paper on the subject. With contributions from statewide conservation-minded organizations, this paper was issued in time for the beginning of the 2019 legislative session. While the paper did not advocate for particular legislation, it provided a backdrop for LVWIN to identify and support two important bills.

With the objectives of this special committee accomplished, the committee was discharged by the board of directors on March 9, 2020. — *Dave Simcox, chair* (natres1@lww-bmc.org)

Redistricting Reform

The Redistricting Reform Committee is a special committee of the League that was formed in July 2017. This year, members continued to work on goals they have embraced since the committee's inception—to raise awareness about the need for redistricting reform in Indiana and to advocate for reform with local and state legislators. This special committee also worked closely with the statewide coalition for redistricting reform, ALL IN for Democracy, which is codirected by Julia Vaughn of Common Cause Indiana and Debbie Asberry of LWV Indiana.

Accomplishments of the committee included an analysis of proportional representation and development of a fact-based informational handout about why redistricting reform is needed. About 50 people attended the committee's Green Drinks presentation in July 2019 with invited speaker Julia Vaughn. The presentation was followed in September by an event the committee helped to promote that brought Trevor Potter, former chair of the Federal Election Commission, to Indiana. The event emphasized constitutional challenges including campaign finance reform, gerrymandering, and voting rights. Also in September, one committee member spoke to about 30 people at the local meeting of the Democrats Club while three other members spoke to about 25 people at the local Republican Club. In November, the chair of the committee, Tomi Allison, and Jim Allison discussed gerrymandering at the request of the Chamber of Commerce. The discussion was recorded and is archived with the Chamber's podcast series.

In November, seven LWV-BMC members organized carpools and attended two events in Indianapolis. The first was a training session about redistricting reform where two committee members gave a presentation about ways to use audio interviews and podcasts to promote reform efforts. Over 50 people attended the training session. Two days later, eight members attended the redistricting reform rally, which was timed to coincide with "Red for Ed Action Day" that brought over 8,000 teachers and supporters to the statehouse.

In January, committee members organized carpools and attended a press conference at Opening Day of the Legislature where legislators were asked to sign the pledge to "End Gerrymandering" in Indiana. This is part of the national Common Cause campaign introduced by Eric Holder and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Committee members also attended League Day at the Statehouse where they met with local state legislators to advocate for a fair and transparent redistricting process that includes citizen input. Packets were prepared with literature, fact sheets, and copies of statewide letters to the editor about redistricting reform. Advocacy and awareness-raising efforts were halted in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In May, the committee applied for and received a Fair Maps Grant from LWVIN that will be used to host a fall documentary series about voter suppression and gerrymandering. The series will take place under the umbrella of the Civics Education Committee, because the Redistricting Committee voted in May to request that the board discharge the committee, with the intent that the committee members will continue with redistricting reform activities in 2020-2021 under the Civics Education Committee. — *Tomi Allison, chair* (redistrict1@lwv-bmc.org); *Vickie Dacey, member* (program1@lwv-bmc.org)

Observer Corps

Members of the Observer Corps attend the meetings of various governmental bodies to keep track of what they are approving or turning down. Individual members report to the group about what has occurred in their particular government body. Some of the topics of importance have been reported in the League newsletter. A current topic we have been reporting on is the Farmers' Market Advisory Council and the Farmers' Market. The observer for the FMAC saw problems with the way the FMAC conducted their meetings, such as changing meeting times and locations without notifying the public, the lack of meeting minutes, and inconsistencies between what happened at the FMAC meetings and what was reported to the City Parks Board. While the observer was researching the background of the FMAC, the situation at the market with a vendor with alleged white supremacist connections escalated. From her research, the observer thought that this could have been resolved before it became such a problem if it had been addressed three years earlier, when the FMAC first learned about it. We sent a report to the Parks Department director and various city government officials involved. After several months of trying to set up a meeting to discuss the situation, the COVID-19 "stay at home" order took effect. We are still concerned with the market and the lack of transparency of the FMAC and are trying to meet with the officials involved.

The LWV-BMC Observer Corps currently has 12 members with some observing more than one board or commission. New this year are Kathy Dilcher (Bloomington Commission on Sustainability) and Kristina Lindborg (Monroe County Environmental Commission). Those observing more than one board or commission are Jim Faber, George Hegeman, Laura Trout, and Elaine Gaul. Observing is an easy way to get involved with the League, especially for new members. The Monroe County Officials List has all of the city and county boards and commissions listed. If anyone sees a board or commission they would like to observe, contact Diedre. — *Diedre Todd, coordinator* (observers1@lwv-bmc.org)

Climate Change Unit

Members of a unit strive to understand an issue that should or does concern the League. Apart from occasional reports to the board, a unit does not have official functions or responsibilities. However, as a group of members it may recommend actions to the board or to standing committees, such as public education or political advocacy. This unit was formed in 2019, with the potential of recommending local political action related to the concern about climate change. A forum on climate change in collaboration with the Citizens Climate Lobby was planned for April 2020 under the auspices of the LWV-BMC Program Committee. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the forum was postponed until large gatherings are deemed safe. — *Albrecht Holschuh, leader* (climate1@lwv-bmc.org)