

The Brown County Voter

January 24, 2016

CALENDAR

Monday, Feb. 8 10:00 am, Board Meeting downstairs at the Library
Everyone welcome!

Saturday, Feb. 13 10:00 am, Meet the Legislators, BC Annex Salmon Room.
Hear and ask questions of Rep. Erich Koch, running for State Senate.
He has requested that the formal Q&A session be limited to one hour,
with more time for informal mingling afterwards. Brent Steele, our State
Senator, is tentatively planning to participate, confirmation pending. The Farm
Bureau will do their usual fantastic refreshments. Hope to see you there.

Saturday, Feb. 20 Presidents Day Conference of Leagues in Indianapolis

Friday, April 1 Our League's response to the State Concurrence on Juvenile Justice is due.
Julie will be sending round information for review, as well as setting a
discussion date for March.

April 12-14 6:00 p.m. Tentative dates for primary candidate forums at the County Annex

April 29 – May 3 “We the People” national competition in Washington, D.C. See page 3.

Tuesday, May 3 Primary elections

Local Government Boards and Commissions update

by Pam Raider

On January 6, the Brown County Commissioners appointed positions for boards and commissions. It appears that the Area Planning and Board of Zoning Appeals boards might be out of compliance with state law. The County Redevelopment Commission has not made any regular reports to the County Commissioners and Council in two years, with the exception of a short written annual report in January 201.

Although rules stated that applicants must be present to be appointed to boards, at least one was appointed without being present (Theresa Anderson, Redevelopment Commission). League member Evan Werling was appointed to the Bean Blossom Sewer Board. League board member Robyn Rosenberg Bowman was appointed to the Property Tax Board of Appeals. Joe Wray was not

reappointed to the Redevelopment Commission. New members on that commission include Dave Redding and Dan Klaker, while Bruce Gould, Theresa Anderson and Jim Shultz were reappointed. Note: At the Commissioners Meeting of January 20, Commissioner Biddle read aloud an email from Ms. Anderson resigning from the Redevelopment Commission because she had an out of state project that would last several months. There was much back and forth over whether to readvertise or pick from among the three remaining applicants from the earlier process. Audience members charged that the Commissioners had known this when they appointed Ms. Anderson, and two of the three applicants (the third was not present) withdrew their applications, charging misbehavior by the Commissioners. This issue was not resolved as of the finalization of this newsletter.

Dave Critzer stepped down from president of County Council and was replaced by Dave Redding, with Jerry Pittman as Vice President. Bruce Gould, Theresa Anderson and Jim Shultz remain on the Redevelopment board. The Commissioners nixed the Yellowwood covered bridge idea, as the public has not stepped forward to fund raise, the County does not have sufficient funds, and the INDOT/ DNR are pressing to move ahead with plans.

Robyn Rosenberg Bowman reported that Judy Hardwick is new school board president. School superintendent applications will end this month. "We The People" won the State championship and National competition will be held April 29 – May 3. Robyn's son Tanner and board member Susanne Gaudin's granddaughter Claire (both also League members) are on the team. Commissioners have changed meeting times: First Wednesdays they will meet at 9 am for mostly technical business – third Wednesdays remain at 6 pm. Council remains the third Monday of the month at 6:30 pm.

Local League Concurs with State Education Position

The League of Women Voters of Indiana has asked each local league to consider the following statement and try to reach concurrence.

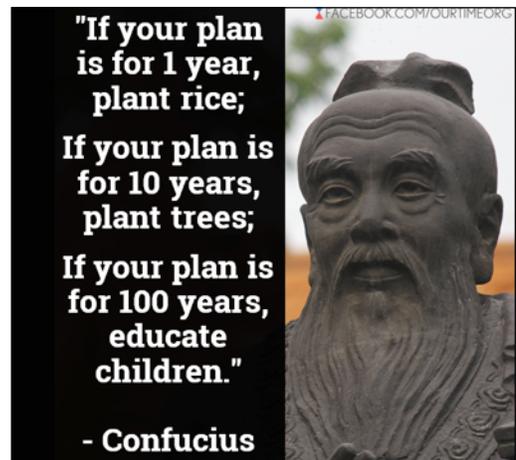
League of Women Voters of Indiana supports a free, publicly-funded, nonsectarian system of schools serving all the state's children from pre-school through 12th grade.

After some interesting and intelligent online discussion, the League of Women Voters of Brown County did concur. However, to represent more points of view, President Julie Winn sent the following statement to the state League:

"The League of Women Voters of Brown County concurs in the proposed statement. In the course of discussion, however, it was clear that several of our members did not concur with the inclusion of preschool, concerned about 1) a further burden on the taxpayer, and 2) the risk of undermining parental choice and responsibility on education for very young children. "

The majority of members concluded, however, that preschool readies our children to learn once they arrive in K-12, so that they are not behind from the beginning, and thus offers benefits to society and to the economy that outweigh the potential tax burden.

During the course of 2016, the State Education Committee will be in touch with local leagues to define the parameters of consensus questions on certain aspects of education in Indiana.



If you have any interest in serving on the State Board (see email from last week), please contact Julie Winn, jmbwinn@hotmail.com.

“We the People” Fund Raiser

Over the past three years, the We the People team from Brown County Junior High School traveled to Washington, D.C. and brought home two first place finishes and one second place finish at the national competition. This year’s team plans to return to Washington at the end of April 2016 to “Reclaim the Title” and win the national championship for a third time.

They need your help! The total cost to send all twenty students to the competition is \$32,000 needed by March 15. The parents are working to raise all of the funds necessary in a very short time frame to make sure every student can take part in this experience.

During the trip, students will compete in simulated Congressional hearings regarding the origins and current interpretations of the Constitution, tour important sites in Washington, D.C., and meet influential representatives of our government serving as volunteer judges for the national hearings.

Please help by donating toward this worthy cause. You can do so at Go Fund Me: Gofundme.com/5mhr2ak. Any contribution you make is greatly appreciated. All donations are tax deductible and you will be sent a letter promptly for your tax records.

If you have questions, please contact Robyn Bowman at robyn@tramcore.com or 317-431-6346. The parents and team are very grateful for your consideration and support!



“Watch Them Like Hawks”

by Judith East

League members and guests were treated to an intense lesson on how to influence our legislators on Dec. 14 when Dr. Jody Madeira spoke to them at the Brown County Library. Dr. Madeira is a professor at the IU School of Law, with a PhD in communications and an MS in sociolinguistics.

Her objectives were to provide an overview of the Indiana legislative process, introduce the general assembly website, demonstrate some bill-tracking websites and share lobbying basics.

She started by explaining the life cycle of a bill:

1. To introduce a bill, a legislator can draft it him/herself, ask the Legislative Drafting Service to do so, or accept a bill from an organization or individual. One legislator can only introduce a certain number of bills per session, but can cosponsor additional bills or convince someone else to introduce one. All bills must be introduced by Jan. 26.

2. A bill gets three readings. After the first, it is assigned to a committee. At the second, minor amendments can be made. On the third, a vote is taken. If passed, it moves to the opposite house. If unamended there, it goes to the Governor for approval.

3. If there are amendments in the second house, it returns to the author. However, if the second house cannot agree on amendments, it goes to an ad hoc conference committee.

Dr. Madeira next provided tips on how to influence your legislator: be ready to express your view in 2-3 sentences; meet with the house leadership beforehand; meet with committee members (who might know little or nothing about the bill); provide a thousand copies of a 1-page flyer summarizing your point (pass out in the hallways before the vote); and be respectful.

Some websites that can help track the progress of a bill include:

- The Indiana General Assembly (not a great resource): Lists types of information: Sessions deadlines, calendar of next week's meetings, lists of who is on a committee, webcasts of sessions, locations and maps, bill numbers and where they are in the process, etc.

- Openstates.org (Dr. Madeira's favorite) is free, and offers tracking in any state and Congress. Can click on photos of legislators to follow their work. Has a "Follow this bill" option. Remembers you by name and emails you daily if you click "on." Provides voting records of legislators.

- Billtrack50 is free for 30 days. Bills you have tracked with keywords can be emailed to you. Permits tracking out-of-state bills.

- Legiscan offers free registration but is not free. Provides weekly monitoring, but that is not enough — daily monitoring is needed.

- Govtrack follows Congress.

Dr. Madeira also provided information on how to meet effectively with legislators and their staff:

Focus on legislators who have not made up their minds. Know their personalities and preferences.

Know their voting records.

Make appointments as far in advance as possible; confirm them. Try to meet at regional office.

Prepare a memo ahead of the meeting so staff can brief the legislator.

Limit groups to 3-4 members, and decide who will say what. Introduce and provide credentials.

Have an agenda and be brief.

Refer to bills by their number.

Don't back anyone into a corner, threaten or debate. You are a credible resource, not the enemy!

Make a specific request.

Dr. Madeira encouraged anyone needing help in learning this process to contact her at jmadeira@indiana.edu or 717-580-0784 (cell) or 812-856-1082 (office).