Voter Service Coordinating Committee

Advocacy area: Voting Rights and Election Policies (Find Election Committee members & their contact information in separate document.)

Goals: Enhance vote integrity, security and bolster voter confidence in the election process, the LWVIN VSCC proposes the following based on the LWVIN 2020 General Election Report. The request is for members of the Elections committees to use, in part or in full, the ideas listed below as amendments to proposed bills.

1. ***Counties cannot wait to employ Voter Verifiable Paper Trail Voting.*** A verifiable paper trail in every county is critical to protecting the integrity of the vote and securing voter confidence. Counties that do not yet use verifiable voting need to be encouraged, in whatever way necessary, to make this happen by the 2024 election and not wait.

2. ***A tracking system to secure and verify the integrity of each mail-in absentee ballot vote should be implemented by every County Clerk by the 2024 election.*** Questions and concern about the security of mail-in early voting requires that all counties make it a priority to enact a tracking system by 2024. An electorate which now tracks their packages from Amazon and their Pizza from Dominoes expects the same level of security for their mail-in absentee ballot.

3. ***Setting up a secure drop box at each polling place protects the integrity of returned absentee ballots and facilitates a timely, safe, and convenient return location.*** The concerns about using drop boxes are related to security. At polling sites, poll workers are present to oversee the return of absentee ballots and at the end of the voting that day, the absentee ballots that have been deposited can be turned in at the Clerk's office.

4. ***Protecting the sanctity of every vote and eliminating uncounted votes can be achieved by allowing mail-in absentee ballots post marked by election day and received by the clerk's office within 7 days of Election Day to be processed as validly cast.***

5. ***Recognizing in-person voting is the choice of most voters, polling places on Election Day should be open until 7 PM.*** Indiana is only one of two states that closes polls at 6 PM. Working Hoosiers who do not have flexible hours and work outside their county are disadvantaged by the 6 PM closing of polls on Election Day.

6. ***The choice of voting straight ticket confuses voters causing frustration and resulting in lost votes.*** League members often serve as poll workers and have witnessed first-hand the difficulties created for voters by the straight-ticket option. Voting electronically puts stress on those who are intimidated by technology. Many think they can hurry the process by voting straight-ticket and then exiting. However, to secure an accurate vote, voters are required, even when voting straight party, to verify each candidate choice, causing the voter to think they did something wrong. Also, with the straight-ticket option, some voters fail to consider down-ticket races. Accuracy is critical to voter security as well as voter confidence in the voting process, continuing the straight-ticket option undermines both.

Potential legislation to watch:

- Require school board candidates to declare a party affiliation. Currently school boards are nonpartisan. We do not know if this bill will be sent to Education or Elections.
- Requiring those who apply for an absentee ballot to include their ID number for example: Driver's License number.
- Change Indiana Constitution so that the county election board appoints the following positions: Clerk, recorder, surveyor, coroner, sheriff, auditor, and treasurer.
- Make it easier for counties to adopt Vote Centers.
- Provide elderly voter or a voter with disabilities the apply for permanent absentee voter status. Absentee ballots would be sent automatically to voters who have permanent absentee voter status.
- Prohibition of firearms at polling places.
- Anticipated: Bills to restrict access and possibly take power away from local and state election officials and transfer it to the state legislature.