



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF PENNSYLVANIA**

226 Forster Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102-3220
www.palwv.org 717.234.1576 info@palwv.org

***Making Democracy Work
Grassroots leadership since 1920***

League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
Comments to the
DEP Citizens Advisory Council
May 22, 2013

Good morning. I am Roberta Winters, Issues and Action Vice President of the League of Women Voters for whom I am speaking today. Budget time in Harrisburg is a busy time. It is also a critical time for the Department of Environmental Protection. Why?

- All aspects of the DEP must be adequately funded to ensure that Pennsylvania protects protect our environment and public health at the same time we strive for economic growth in our agricultural and tourism sectors as well as industrialization from resource extraction. Without transparent, comprehensive testing of water and thorough, on-the-ground assessment of environmental impacts on sensitive ecosystems, our Commonwealth is in jeopardy. Lack of data and an absence of related standards for such elements as chloride further inhibit national, science-based studies designed to guide future decisions. The League again implores you as members of the CAC, perhaps through input in the Auditor General's review, to advocate for adequate funding for all aspects of DEP – not just its role in apparently fast-tracking permits.
- With legislators focused on dollars and cents, the need to appoint a well-qualified, conscientious, and credible Secretary of the DEP requires attention. You can make a difference by encouraging elected officials to seek, select, and appoint the right person to assume this critical role during these unprecedented times of industrial development. The right person in this high-profile role will help renew trust in the government's essential role of protecting our right to clean air, pure water, and the preservation of natural resources for generations yet to come. We are hopeful that Mr. Ambruzzo might collaborate with you in proposing prompt and meaningful action in this regard.
- The responsibility of the DEP in the area of enforcement and fines, a topic this morning, should be underscored in light of current economic realities. It is essential that the consequences of development – both intentional and unanticipated – not become the burden of the Pennsylvania taxpayer. DEP can best prompt compliance to regulations through meaningful fines and prompt disciplinary action. Any proposed budget should also provide for adequate bonding and fees as well as a superfund to pass on costs to those parties responsible – not the taxpayers.
- Finally, today you will be looking to integrate the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index or PNDI with permitting processes. Through the League's educational outreach, we have

become familiar with some recently developed and very sophisticated tools that may be useful to the work of DEP. We would hope that adequate funding might be provided in the upcoming budget for staff to review, master, and use such tools as appropriate.¹

On behalf of the League, I wish to express my continued appreciation for the opportunity to provide input to you. In specific, I would like to thank the Public Participation Committee for their consideration of the comments and the resulting recommendations that will hopefully enhance transparency, communication, and civic participation in decision-making processes. We value the critical role you play as an important sounding board and amplifier for the voice of Pennsylvanians.

¹ Regional and federal information and resource tools include: Energy Zones (EZ) Mapper or EISPC –EZ Mapper <http://www.cleanenergystates.org/events/cesa-rps-webinar-introduction-to-eispc-energy-zones-mapping-tool/>, USFWS IPaC system <http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/> and the Green Infrastructure work of Nisource <http://www.conservationfund.org/projects/mitigation-profile-nisource-strategic-planning-to-offset-pipeline-impacts/>