



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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**The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
Public Comments to the
Citizens Advisory Committee of the Department of Environmental Protection
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
June 17, 2014**

Good morning. I am Roberta Winters speaking on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania. We thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to address several items on your agenda as well as some other issues of concern.

First, watersheds are a priority in our Commonwealth. We are eager to hear about the regional assessment program. It is imperative that we know the status of these invaluable resources so that appropriate protections can be put into place. Learning more about best practices for safeguarding and restoring watersheds is also critical. However, even optimum assessments, regulations, and practices require a heightened degree of on-the-ground oversight to assure that the rules are being followed and enforced. As budget deliberations continue, the League implores each of you to pursue the need for additional staff to monitor and enforce existing regulations. Further, violators need to be penalized in a manner that not only increases much-needed State revenue but also promotes compliance in order to maintain our Constitutional right to pure water.¹

Connected to these watershed issues is our Chesapeake Bay Agreement. The League trusts that the Milestone Evaluations will be comprehensive in nature and reflect the cumulative impact of all sources responsible for degradation of our waters. State agencies must be accountable for accurately reporting and limiting that which flows downstream into this treasured estuary.

As many of you may realize, the League has long been involved with Act 54. We are pleased that the draft report is on today's agenda. We hope that a more extensive discussion will be scheduled to provide guidance for needed improvements in underground coal mining.

Finally, there are two issues that we would like to encourage members of the Citizens Advisory Commission to address.

- First, there is the issue of leasing of additional state lands for natural gas development. In concert with our Constitution, the League believes that *Pennsylvania's*

¹ See Article 1 Section 27 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth and this Department have a responsibility to conserve and maintain them. Please hold our elected and appointed staff accountable to do so.

- Second, the League has often expressed concern about air quality and its monitoring. We applaud efforts to collect data but have reservations regarding how it is reported. Average emissions are deceptive when dealing with specific, brief, high intensity periods of discharge that can have significant impacts on public health. This is particularly true of the expanding operations surrounding natural gas extraction, processing, and transmission. Evolving research, such as that from Colorado's Department of Public Health, reveals particular implications of air pollution on pregnant women and newborns in close proximity to such industrial sites.² Comprehensive and cumulative information on air quality over both the short and long-term are needed to determine direct exposures as the Department *seeks to provide for the health and safety of its citizens through a cleaner environment.*³

Thank you for your attention.

² See <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/1306722/>

³ See http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/about_dep/13464