

1930s

With the prosperity of the Roaring 20's now in the past and the effects of the Great Depression as well as WWII now becoming a fact of life, the administration and work of the League of Women Voters needed to change. The League's budget was cut along with administration personnel. Due mostly to gas rationing affiliates were encouraged to meet in small, neighborhood groups to study issues. Thus grassroots activity was firmly institutionalized as way of assessing concerns, studying and strategizing. During this decade, LWV worked for the Social Security and Food and Drug Acts and they launched a campaign to support development of a merit system taking many federal jobs from the spoils system and placing them under Civil Service.

Locally, South Bend population in 1930 was 104,193. During this decade, IU began offering classes in evening as S.B. Central H.S., the Bendix Airport opened, buses replaced the electric trolleys and the Bendix Strike began which was the first national UAW sit-down strike.

On June 30, 1934, the Merchants National Bank in South Bend was the last bank to be robbed by the [Dillinger](#) gang.¹

Although affiliates were urged to meet in neighborhoods South Bend chapter continued to meet at YWCA throughout this decade. They met in September of each year to plan the year's study topics and the study sessions for the year would begin in October. Often they would have their social events in the summer leaving the work of study and legislative programming outlined by the national league in the fall, winter and spring. Some of League topics of interest during this decade: citizenship privileges and responsibilities of the homemaker (1930-31); U.S. Foreign Policy by the Committee on International Cooperation to Prevent War. (1932) Insurance Laws Affecting Housewife, Poor Relief, Public Utilities; Homes or a Home – old age pensions laws. (1932)

South Bend was the host for the Indiana League of Women Voters annual convention in 1932 at the Oliver Hotel. Also in 1932 they had increase in membership by more than 50 members and organized a junior league of women voters for younger women. In 1935, both the Junior and Regular LWV had 40-50 members.

I found interesting the committees and officers of the time. In 1939: Slate of officers: President, two Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer and seven Directors. There were standing committees: finance, publications and program, legislation, telephone, membership, parliamentarian, hospitality, historian, publicity. And there were special committees: Government and education, Government and its operation, government and child welfare, government and the legal status of women, government and economic welfare, government

and foreign policy. The decade ended with a membership drive in August 1939 with expected increase of membership by September of that year from 100 to 150.

1940s

LWV nationally, through this decade, starting at the 1944 convention, it was agreed that major structural changes were needed and LWV became an association of members rather than a federation of state leagues and the department system of managing various facets of the League program were abolished. The name was changed to the League of Women Voters of the United States and the national program was considerably shortened. This was done in effort to narrow programming to suit wider participation of members and increase numbers of members involved. Power given more now with local members; members joined through local Leagues in their communities. The local League became the basis of organization and representation in the League, while power was vested in the members. It is in and through the local League that members determine, directly and indirectly, what the League does and how it does it. Members influence League decisions either personally or through representatives at state and national levels by electing leaders, determining how money will be spent through adoption of budgets, choosing program, participating in the member agreement process and by deciding the bylaws.

Although power was increased at the local level, the state Leagues continued to have a strong role. Their responsibility included organizing and developing local Leagues, promoting finance programs of the local leagues to further the work of the league as a whole and transmission of funds to further the national League's work.

The League's anti-isolationist stand after the War upheld the principle of international cooperation for establishment of world institutions for maintenance of law and order. Nationally, the League helped lead the effort to establish United Nations and U.S. participation. Supported creation of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Also supported creation of NATO and economic aid to less developed countries.

In, 1947 the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund (CCCMT) was set up as a vehicle to expand the League's work and to service requests from women in former totalitarian countries for guidance on the role of citizens under a democratic system of government and to help with civic action programs

In its early years, the Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund provided citizen education publications for use both in the United States and abroad. Of particular significance to the League was the Fund's work with the LWVUS in developing a series of pamphlets and discussion guides for the Freedom Agenda project. These became the resource materials for

League members and community groups on the League's study of the relationship of national security to individual liberty

South Bend population in 40 was now 101,268. And since many men were away serving in WW II the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was formed in 1943....The South Bend Blue Sox – one of the original four teams. They played every year of the league's existence until 1954. In 1949, legendary percussionist [Lionel Hampton](#) was informed that his concert at South Bend's Palais du Royale would be a blacks only event; he threatened to call for a boycott of the venue, and the affair proceeded as an integrated evening, which newspapers said led to all attendees breaking out in "paroxysms of ecstasy."

Locally, at State annual meeting of LWV at Indiana University, the delegation voted to favor reorganization of the state board of education and to support changing superintendent of public instruction from elective to appointment official. South Bend League assisted in distribution of the 1940 edition of the Indiana Voters' Handbook published by the Indiana League.

Several newspaper articles at end of 1941 and into 1942 about South Bend League having slogan "clear the tracks" toward "straight thinking and true facts which would be the basis of their new study project. This project was based on a kit of information prepared by the Indiana League containing discussions of and answers to many topics. In January local League began participating in a local, state and national program of education more intensive than any in its history. This program was an outgrowth of conferences held by national league's board immediately after the declaration of war upon Japan, Germany and Italy and subsequent meetings of Indiana state league's board. It was believed the League of Women Voters needed to be reborn to teach themselves and others better understanding of government. They were now committed to reach a larger public than ever in its history, reaching them face to face with new methods, special instruction of the members and with new determination. This was the League's war time service program and plan. Plan included three steps:

1. Enlistment of league members for community informational service asking for pledges of hours to keep citizens informed and alert on governmental affairs
2. Study Sessions to train workers in use of information which will be provided. This is information members may not see in newspaper headlines.
3. Task of members carrying that information to the public.

Interestingly, there is no information about local league work or involvement after this time early 1942. No presidents listed, no newspaper articles, nothing until October 1948 when there was an item in the newspaper stating that League of Women Voters had an active chapter in South Bend for many years, was then disbanded several years and was now

reorganizing. In December 1948, they elected new officers with guests from Indianapolis, Michigan City, Elkhart and Washington D.C.

In 1949, they were now again an active chapter with study program for the year: Know your town government with speakers from city positions at each meeting. These meetings were now not at Y.W.C.A. but instead were in member's homes.

By Pam Wycliff