



## FIRST-TIME VOTER PROGRAM LAUNCHES ACROSS INDIANA AREA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

*First program of its kind to launch in Indiana*

February 14, 2018 - Lafayette, INDIANA - The League of Women Voters of Greater Lafayette launched an education program in Tippecanoe County, Indiana across three participating school districts for engaging and educating high school students in first time voting. The program is aimed at creating lifetime voters and increasing young voter participation by educating local high school students in voting behaviors and setting up polling places in participating schools. The program is the first of its kind in the state of Indiana.

Built through a partnership between the Lafayette League of Women Voters, the Tippecanoe County Election Board, the West Lafayette School, Lafayette School and Tippecanoe School corporations, the new program, "First-Time Voter, Lifetime Voter," educates high school students in how to become registered voters and cast their first votes. But the program goes beyond education alone, high school juniors and seniors who meet Indiana's voting requirements will register to vote, learn how to make an informed ballot choice and cast real votes with their friends and teachers in campus-based vote centers beginning with the May 2018 Indiana primary.

"Voter turnout tends to be low and young people vote at significantly lower rates. We know that our youngest voters can be intimidated by the voting process and often stay away from the polls for this very reason. We help them get registered to vote, but preparing them to evaluate the issues or candidates and then actually casting a vote is a much bigger challenge. The solution requires collaboration between the schools and the election officials," said Ken Jones, the League's high school program chairperson. "This program is unique in that it culminates in actual votes cast in the Indiana primary, not a theoretical classroom vote or straw poll."

The First-Time Voter curriculum has been developed by a cross-school team of teachers and shared across all participating high schools. Students will learn the role and responsibilities of a voter, how to register to vote, how to become an informed voter, how to cast their vote, and finally assess the results of an election. "It's important to us as educators that our students understand the voting process from beginning to end so they can make informed decisions on their own, which we hope will be instilled in them for the rest of their lives," commented Grant Fischer, Government Teacher at Lafayette Jefferson High School and curriculum development lead. "This isn't about one political party or a specific candidate. This is about understanding the importance of voting and making their voices heard," he continued.

The program includes collaboration with the Tippecanoe County Board of Election to open early vote centers in each of the participating high schools so that students will be able to vote on campus during school hours. "Given the student population size of these high schools, we anticipate that approximately 500 – 750 high school juniors and seniors will be involved in 'First-Time Voter, Lifetime Voter,'" said Christa Coffey, Tippecanoe County Clerk.



High school voting in Tippecanoe County is scheduled for Friday, May 4, 2018. Participating high schools include Lafayette Jefferson High School, West Lafayette Community High School, Harrison High School and McCutcheon High School.

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#### **About The League of Women Voters of Greater Lafayette**

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The Greater Lafayette League of Women Voters was formed in April 1920. Although its first task was teaching newly enfranchised women the mechanics of registering and voting, it has evolved into a non-partisan political organization whose purpose is to encourage the informed and active political participation of all citizens.

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