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FAYETTE COUNTY NAMES NEW ELECTION BUREAU DIRECTOR

Uniontown, PA – With the 2021 General Election just two months away, Fayette County has named its new election bureau director.

Mary Elizabeth “MaryBeth” Kuznik of Irwin was recently hired and began training for her director role Aug. 31, preparing to take the reins when current Director Larry Blosser retires Oct. 22.

Kuznik most recently served as Armstrong County’s elections director, and spent 15 years as the executive director and president of the VotePA Education Fund, a statewide voting rights organization. Prior to that, she spent many years serving as a poll worker, judge and inspector of elections throughout Westmoreland County, gaining valuable hands-on election experience.

“Having worked for several other counties, I’ve come to love elections. I love voters and working with poll workers,” Kuznik said. “Fayette County is such a historic county, with sites like the National Road and Fort Necessity. There’s so much history here, which makes elections here extremely important. It’s an honor to be able to continue that tradition.”

Kuznik also graduated from Duquesne University School of Law in 2020 and became a licensed attorney earlier this year.

“One of the main reasons I decided to go to law school was that I’ve always had a great interest in election laws,” she said.

Kuznik and Blosser are currently working together to ensure a smooth transition prior to the next election. Blosser is also spending his final months reflecting on his decades working for Fayette County.

“My years working for the county have meant a lot to me. I’ve worked with a lot of great people over the years; all with a lot of different attitudes,” Blosser said. “I learned you just have to work at it every day to make sure you meet everyone’s requirements for what they want and how they want to be treated.”

Blosser started as a garage attendant in February 1982, before moving to a voting machine attendant position from 1984-85. He then became the buildings and grounds department’s night superintendent, a position he held until 1999 when he transferred to the election bureau as its full-time voting machine technician. He briefly served as acting director in 2009, before taking on the director role in February 2010.

“February of 2022 would’ve been 40 years for me at the county. I remember when the big flood of 1985 happened on our November Election Day. Everyone came together from all these different departments to help. We were stuck until spring of the next year getting everything situated,” Blosser said, referring to the Monongahela River flood that left Fayette County communities from Point Marion to Belle

Vernon underwater. "In Fayette City, the water picked up two, 800-pound voting machines and moved them around the building. We had special elections for five different precincts to finish the job that year, but everybody pitched in and helped us. I don't think the people of Fayette County realize what kind of dedicated people they have working for them."

Blosser said the thing he'll miss most about serving as election bureau director is meeting county voters.

"It's the people. You never know who you're going to meet throughout the day. It used to be really nice when we would go out to the precincts throughout the area and program the machines," Blosser said. "You had to build a reputation with the people you met so that, when you called, they knew exactly who you were. A lot of that changed when voting machines went electronic in 2006 and 2007."

Moving forward, Blosser said he's unsure what the future holds for him.

"I really don't know what's next. I'm going to play it by ear," he said. "For now, I'm really looking forward to enjoying the extra time with my grandkids."

Fayette County Commissioner Scott Dunn said Kuznik's experience makes her a qualified successor for Blosser.

"I want to thank our outgoing director, Larry Blosser, for his years of dedicated service and wish him well in his retirement. I hold our right to vote as one of our most cherished rights. This right is what sets the United States apart from many other countries. Voting has been made more confusing in the recent elections, as the county election bureau follows the Pennsylvania Constitution, election laws of the legislature, Supreme Court rulings and rules of the Secretary of State. Oftentimes, these rules conflict, as they can be interpreted differently," Dunn said. "MaryBeth has knowledge from her past employment, and she has been involved in elections since 1992. Her experience, knowledge and passion for all things election law is evident and will be a benefit at the Fayette County Election Bureau and to the citizens of Fayette County."

Commissioner Vince Vicites agreed Kuznik's years as Armstrong County's elections director and familiarity with election issues will help her serve Fayette County well.

"The election bureau is one of the most important departments in county government. The commissioners have taken steps to strengthen that department by hiring Kuznik. Our election bureau team can now move forward and carry out this important function of county government," Vicites said. "We wish Larry Blosser the best in his retirement, and we want to thank him for his many decades of county service."

Commissioner Chairman Dave Lohr said Kuznik is joining a department that is "well-staffed, knowledgeable and dedicated" and he's looking forward to a "smooth transition."

"We're very happy to welcome MaryBeth aboard. Our election bureau has grown in the last two years to meet the additional demands placed on us by decisions made in Harrisburg. For many years, Fayette County has had the benefit of unparalleled leadership in Larry Blosser. He's built a team that sets the standard for other counties," Lohr said. "Every department in county government does important work, but the election bureau lies at the very heart of our democracy. Elections are ultimately the responsibility of the county, and I cannot overstate how seriously we take that responsibility. From our paid staff within the election bureau, to other county staff who assist during the election season, to our judges and inspectors of elections, to working with polling locations in every one of our 77 precincts, this

is a monumental undertaking with very real repercussions. Ultimately, the weight of this responsibility rests squarely on the shoulders of the election bureau director.”

Lohr said “words cannot express” the gratitude he has for Blosser and his many years of service.

“His knowledge, expertise and dedication are beyond compare. The state looks to our election bureau, in general, and our director, in particular, to set the standard for other county, and that speaks volumes,” Lohr said. “I wish Larry all the best for a long, productive and fulfilling retirement.”

To learn more about the Fayette County Election Bureau, call 724-430-1289 or visit www.fayettecountypa.org/236/Election-Board.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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