



LWV-VA: Making a Difference in Virginia

Many things are happening around the state as local Leagues continue to prepare voters for the November elections. At the state level, Co-Presidents Dianne Blais and Lois Page announced the release of a public service video entitled “Why Vote.” The video asked citizens “What Do You Care About?” and pointed out that those folks being elected will determine what happens in the future.

Plans also are underway for the League’s kick-off for the 2016 legislative session that begins in January. The Pre-Session of the Women’s Legislative Roundtable is planned for December 2 in Richmond. Legislators and non-profit leaders will gather to talk about their plans for 2016.

State and local Leagues are working hard to empower voters with non-partisan information about candidates and the election process.

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News Flash

LWV-VA’s Legislative Coordinator Carol Noggle reports that as of Oct. 21 “every voter in Virginia can now go to VOTE411 and see his/her candidate(s) for at least two races -- House and Senate. Every House and Senate race is published on 411.

“That does not mean that every candidate has sent responses to our questions, but all were invited to do so -- more than once! A voter will at least see the name of the House and Senate candidates that will be on his/her ballot. Quick sequence of steps: Enter your address and click on “Enter”. Click on green “Get Personalized information...” See the map and click on green “Show My Races,” click on “Go to My Races,” see the first set of candidates or in gray box click on “View My Races,” and choose a race.

“In some local League areas (Fairfax, Arlington, Falls Church, Prince William, Richmond Metro, and Washington County) voters will also see local races. In those areas voters can truly take advantage of the feature of the Vote411.org “One-Stop Shop” for voter information.



Presidents' Messages



Thank you all who contributed to LWV-VA's Fall Fund Drive! We truly appreciate each and every one who donated. Many of you already do so much for LWV and still donated.

The fundraising letter to which so many of you generously responded was only mailed to LWV members - there are many people that would support LWV but need a nudge. LWV-VA would like a list of possible donors who are not members but we need to make that list. Is there anyone who would be willing to work on researching donors' addresses and entering them into an Excel spreadsheet? This would be used to ask non-members for donations.

LWV-VA has an office in Richmond, but no one who staffs it - for an organization to thrive, we need administrative support. Although this isn't sexy, it is a true need and is a major reason to ask non-members for support.

Please contact me if you would be willing to work from your house - volunteering some time for LWV-VA entering addresses.

With much gratitude and hope, *Dianne*

We were delighted with the planning, arrangements, turnout, and sense of being helpful to local Leagues that led to our Fall Forum/Workshop in Richmond in early October. We all came away a little more prepared to deal with the upcoming consensus (consensi?) on amending the U.S. Constitution and how we think money in politics should be regulated. Many thanks to Frances Schutz, Program Director, and Lynn Johnston, Arrangements Director, for a great job.

Another accomplishment we want to promote is a brief "Get Out the Vote" video created by our own Carol Lindstrom of the Richmond League. The video is entitled "What Do You Care About?" and urges Virginians to vote in this upcoming election that has such an effect on their daily lives. It has been distributed widely in the hopes of having it appear in statewide media outlets. We hope that local Leagues will get this out in their communities in a timely fashion, as in before November 3.

And then there is our signature legislative event, the Pre-

session Women's Legislative Roundtable, on December 2, in the General Assembly Building in Richmond. Carol Noggle, Legislative Coordinator, is gathering a host of like-minded non-profit organizations to share their hopes and plans for the upcoming state legislative session. A number of Governor's Cabinet members also speak and sometimes the Governor drops in. The luncheon speaker will focus on reforming the prison system. This is always an interesting event with a chance to mix and mingle with fellow advocates.

Lois

Do You Read *The Virginia Voter*?

At times your Board of Directors wonders how many people actually read *The Virginia Voter* either from cover to cover or even just looking at articles of interest. We are taking a survey to determine how effective our publicity is and if other information is getting to our readers.

Would you please take a moment and [Click Here](#) to let us know that you did look at the *Voter*. No long detailed survey and no questions. Just send the email and you are done. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

LWV-VA *The Virginia Voter* 2015 - 2016

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The League of Women Voters of Virginia
501 East Franklin Street, Suite 624
Richmond, VA 23219
804-521-4171
www.lwv-va.org LWV-VA@gmail.com

Co-Presidents: Dianne Blais 703-830-1998
dblais.lwvva@gmail.com

Lois Page 703-690-0908
lpage.lwvva@cox.net

Editor: Ron Page 703-690-0908
pagegolfer@cox.net

Coordinator: Flo Marks 434-591-0230
ffmarks@aol.com

The Virginia VOTER also is available to non-Virginia League members on our website.

Please e-mail address corrections to the office

LWV-VA Stages Workshop to Aid Local Leagues With Two LWVUS Consensus Challenges

By Frances Schutz, LWV-VA Program Director

Over 60 Leaguers from all over the state braved threats of heavy rain and flooding to gather in Richmond in early October for a forum and workshop on two upcoming consensus issues prepared by LWVUS. The national League has asked for input nationwide on two issues they call “Structures of Democracy”: Amending the U.S. Constitution and Money in Politics.



Audience listens intently to a question posed to the speaker.

Leaguers are being asked to complete their studies of the Constitution by December 1 and of campaign financing by February 1, 2016.

Attendees agreed that the two speakers both broadened and deepened understanding of the issues. Leaguers also got a refresher on the consensus process, how to conduct a consensus meeting, using the Constitutional Amendment process as a guide, and finally, a short ‘teaser’ demo of the LWVUS PowerPoint presentation on Money in Politics [MIP]. Consensus questions for both issues are now on the LWVUS website, and have been shared with those who attended.

Dr. Dan Palazzolo from the University of Richmond was an engaging speaker, and one could definitely tell he spends a lot of time teaching. His primary point was that money in politics is like water—it finds its way around most barriers. He suggested that the most feasible improvement is to demand that all donations be transparent. His presentation on the issue of MIP was most accessible and left us eager for more. He introduced us to a useful organization: Open Secrets, and the website connected with it.



Dr. Dan Palazzolo

Gail Deady, of the ACLU of Virginia, grabbed our attention by using the ERA as an example of

the process of amending the Constitution, and led us through consideration of whether it might be necessary or desirable, or whether laws already in place might have reduced the need for an amendment.

Both speakers have graciously agreed to share their PowerPoint files with us. Workshop attendees have already received Dr. Palazzolo’s. Gail Deady’s will arrive soon, after her boss has checked all the references for correct attribution.

A PowerPoint presentation, “Money in Politics: Developing a

Common Understanding of the Issues” produced by the LWVUS was overviewed by Co-President Lois Page. This presentation, available on the national website, is a primer written for the use of League members as part of informing themselves, their Leagues and the general public. The goal, as stated in the title, is to develop a common understanding of the issues. [Click Here](#) to download the presentation.



Program Director Frances Schutz, Co-President Lois Page and speaker Gail Deady confer prior to the start of the workshop.

[Link: <http://lww.org/content/money-politics-developing-common-understanding-issues>]

Understanding the Ins and Outs of Current State and National Program Issues

By Frances Schutz, State Program Director

By the time you read this, your League will have had heard the chance to hear the speakers at the Fall Workshop Day, and returned with some materials that may facilitate your consensus meetings on the Structures of Democracy studies this fall and winter. Additional materials are available online at the LWVUS website for members. Your local League may choose to publish one or more of the study papers in your League Newsletter. Please take advantage of these resources before your scheduled consensus meetings.

For those not used to visiting the LWVUS website, this should tantalize you to try it out: The most recently posted Money in Politics paper highlights components of effective campaign finance reforms at the state and local level since the *Citizens United* decision in 2010. The paper covers disclosure, coordination, small donor funded elections, Pay-to-Play, and oversight and enforcement. A state and local template is posted separately for Leagues to use in evaluating their state and local laws.

New MIP Review Papers Available

Four Money in Politics papers have now been posted on the MIP page. These include Money in Politics: The Debate: Can Government Regulate Money in Politics? which looks at three of the ideological underpinnings of the debate about whether government can restrict money in politics, Money in Politics: Corruption and Rationales for Regulating Campaign Finance which outlines types or categories of corruption that have been offered in Court decisions and analyzed in legal scholarship, Money in Politics: The First Amendment which provides an overview of the First Amendment as it pertains to campaign finance and [Money in Politics: Shifts in Supreme Court Opinion about Money in Politics](#) which provides an overview of the shifts in Supreme Court opinions about money in politics and the impact that has had on campaign finance laws and regulation. These and other MIP materials can be found on the MIP Review page.

**Remember December 2
is
WLRT Pre-Session in Richmond.
Please Mark Your Calendar Today!**

Constitutional Amendment Study Guide Available

The Constitutional Amendment Study Guide is now available for Leagues. The Guide includes the Consensus Questions as well as Pro and Con Arguments, background materials and Points of View. In addition to the Study Guide, brief synopses of two articles by the committee on viewpoints on amending the Constitution espoused by Professors Kathleen Sullivan and Adrian Vermeule are also online. Additional information can be found on the CA Study Page.

You may also be interested to know that the Study Committee on Fracking has met, and members are busy researching the areas of interest they have determined may focus their efforts as they move forward. Their next scheduled meeting is a phone conference call, to meet sometime after the November General Election. Committee members come from across the state – from Washington County to Williamsburg and South Hampton Roads, and northward to Fairfax and Arlington. The issues most directly affecting these areas may well differ. The diversity of the committee representation should ensure inclusion of several constituencies, and a broadly applicable consensus report.

The LWV-VA is also considering how best to help LLs update and distribute their fliers on the Restoration of Voting Rights for Felons. We are delighted that the process has been greatly simplified since our original study in 2007-9 and position adoption in 2009. We'll be in touch.

League Urges IRS to Adopt New 501(c)(4) Regulations

On September 9, the League of Women Voters joined with other concerned organizations to urge the Internal Revenue Service to adopt new regulations that properly interpret the statutory eligibility requirements to qualify for tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(4) “social welfare” organization. The letter read, in part:

“Our organizations are writing to strongly urge the Internal Revenue Service to adopt new regulations that properly interpret the statutory eligibility requirements to qualify for tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(4) “social welfare” organization.

“Our groups include the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, Demand Progress, Democracy 21, League of Women Voters, People For the American Way, Public Citizen, and Sunlight Foundation.

“Proper new IRS regulations must, among other things, limit to an “insubstantial” amount, the campaign-related expenditures that a “social welfare” organization can undertake.”

Make Your League More Visible, the Right Way

By Sue Lewis, Leadership Development Director

This is the time of year when most local Leagues are the most visible in their communities. So, it is important to concentrate on how your publicity works with the various media in your locality. The Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) program offered several tips in August on media outreach.

Media isn't just your local newspaper or radio station; it is also the social media like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Each media platform is approached differently, but there are some common elements. Starting with your story, look for a Hook to engage the reader, tying it to what great work you've been doing in your community. Make sure that the Content is engaging, maybe with links to your website or

Use the Correct Terminology			
<i>Use:</i> Women's Voting Rights	<i>Not:</i>	Woman Suffrage	
<i>Use:</i> League neither supports nor opposes candidates or parties	<i>Not:</i>	League is non-partisan	
<i>Use:</i> Engages in public policy issues	<i>Not:</i>	Engages in the political process	
<i>Use:</i> Local, state and federal government	<i>Not:</i>	3 levels of government	
<i>Use:</i> LWV provides information	<i>Not:</i>	LWV informs people	
<i>Use:</i> "Join" – as in <u>participate with</u>	<i>Not:</i>	"Join" means become a local member	
<i>Use:</i> National network of Leaguers	<i>Not:</i>	Volunteer members, donors, On-line activists	

While content will vary, there are some key words that help enhance our media messages. We like to use our League Lingo, but not everyone knows what we mean sometimes. So try making some of these changes as suggested in the attached graphic.

Facebook page. And for Visual Appeal, include pictures or even videos – avoid large blocks of text if you can.

It is important to consider which media platform to concentrate on for an event or other outreach. For an event, decide who you want to attend, and use the media that best targets that audience. For other outreach, like celebrating a success, gear your media approach to the group(s) that benefited from your work. As with all use of media, remember that you are trying to attract members while you are maintaining visibility!

For more information about the MLD program, contact Sue Lewis slewis.lwvva@gmail.com or Linda Garvelink, garvelink@earthlink.net, your State Coordinators.

The Voting Rights Act: Before and After

With the recent 50th anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 several pieces were written about how the Supreme Court's 2013 ruling in the Shelby, Alabama vs. Holder, Attorney General et.al. case has emasculated the original law.

We recommend two articles written on the subject to better understand the current situation. Although they are lengthy, they are well worth reading. The first article is a history entitled "The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and How America Did Overcome" by Markus Schmidt of the Richmond Times-Dispatch. The URL is http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/government-politics/article_7d47ec7d-bf98-5014-8e25-5c72b2617a39.html

The second article is "A Dream Undone" by Jim Rutenberg

of The New York Times. It takes a look inside the 50-year campaign to roll back the Voting Rights Act. The URL is http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/29/magazine/voting-rights-act-dream-undone.html?_r=0

WLRT Pre-Session Scheduled For December 2

Plans are shaping up for the League's annual Women's Legislative Roundtable. In preparation for the WLRTs, the League holds a Pre-Session gathering early in December, to provide a look ahead at the anticipated issues that will arise in the General Assembly session, starting in January. Networking with activists and many advocacy groups is one of the top reasons given for attending. A full morning of five-minute power speeches from issue experts who have been on the front lines during General Assembly sessions will preview, predict, and prepare league members and others for action in January. A registration form is on the following page.



*The League of Women Voters of Virginia
Invites You to Attend*

PRE-SESSION WOMEN’S LEGISLATIVE ROUNDTABLE
On Capitol Square -- Wednesday, December 2, 2015

General Assembly Building, House Room D

Speakers: Non-Profit Representatives & Governor’s Cabinet Members
Topic: Legislation in the 2016 General Assembly

MORNING: Free and Open to the Public
9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.
Coffee and Tea Will be Available

* * * * *

LUNCHEON: \$30

Luncheon Guest Speakers:
Brian Moran, Virginia Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
Tonya Chapman, Deputy Secretary

Topic: “Criminal Justice Reforms in Virginia”

Note: Registration for Luncheon: Deadline: November 25, 2015

* * * * *

For more information visit our website www.lwv-va.org or contact: cnogg@comcast.net

**Parking and Directions and Features:

<http://viriniageneralassembly.gov/viriniastatecapitol.php?secid=7&activesec=1#!hb=1&mainContentTabs=1&content=1,includes/contentTemplate.php%3Ftid%3D44%26ctype%3Db%26cid%3D23>

Luncheon Reservation Form: Deadline: November 25. No Refunds.

Please Print: Name _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Number of Reservations _____

League or organization _____ Vegan choice needed? _____

Add names on back of this form as needed. Detach and mail completed form with your \$30 check made payable to:
LWV of Virginia - Address: LWV-VA c/o Pat Hurst, 12 Georgetown Green, Charlottesville, VA 22901

Local Leagues Providing Important Services to Their Communities

Loudoun County League Recognized for Voter Registration

LWV Loudoun County was recognized during the September Loudoun County Board of Supervisors meeting for its extraordinary work with high school voter registration (1,400 per year). The League was given a certificate of appreciation. President Priscilla Godfrey was delighted she could then advertise the last three forums they are sponsoring for the supervisors race.

Godfrey reports that the election office is trying to assume responsibility for the high school registration by getting the school system to assign a week as high school voter registration. Election officers will conduct registration in the high school auditoriums with the entire senior class. They have close to 4,000 seniors so “this would be amazing if it happens.” *[Ed note: meanwhile the League there has got it covered.]*

Forum Date and Meeting Place Changed When One Party Declines to Show Up

WILLIAMSBURG — The League of Women Voters Oct. 8 James City County Board of Supervisors candidate forum was shifted to a friendlier meet-and-greet reception after none of the Republican candidates committed to the event.

League of Women Voters of the Williamsburg Area president Linda Rice wrote in a message to participants that the group is concerned holding a candidate forum without any Republican candidates “may create the impression that the League favors one candidate over another.”

The forum will be shifted so candidates can make a five-minute statement and attendees can speak to them in an informal setting about issues.

“The League of Women Voters has a long history of conducting nonpartisan candidate forums and has always taken very seriously its role of educating the American people,” Rice wrote to candidates. “The people who want to represent us, our families and our best interests owe it to the voters to give them a chance to make an informed decision on Election Day.”



Left to right: Suzanne Volpe, supervisor for Algonkian district and a League member; Scott York, chairman of Loudoun’s board of supervisors; Priscilla Godfrey, president of Loudoun’s League of Women Voters; and Jean Brown, co-chair of Voter Service.

LWVFA Speaks to Fairfax County Social Studies Teachers

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area was invited to give a presentation at the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Mini Conference for the high school social studies teachers. On September 4, Maggi Luca, Voter Services, Beth Tudan, Executive Director, and Helen Kelly and Peggy Knight, Co-Presidents, gave three 50-minute presentations to some of the teachers. The information focused on League services and tools that the teachers could use to help the students become civic minded and actively involved in local and national government.

The teachers were most interested in VOTE411, “Facts for Voters”, and our monthly studies because they provided unbiased information on local issues. These studies are listed on our website and published in our monthly newsletter, “Fairfax VOTER”.

The teachers were also interested in the community service opportunities available to students by volunteering at the “Meet and Greet” Candidate Forums that LWVFA is co-sponsoring with community partners throughout Fairfax County. The teachers suggested that we put a link to resources for teachers and students on our website. We will be developing that after the election season. One of the teachers has invited LWVFA to speak to her government classes about registering to vote and the entire voting process. We are hopeful that this will be the beginning of a relationship with the local high schools.

According to LWVFA Co-president Peggy Knight, “It was a wonderful exchange of ideas with some of the teachers. Other Leagues may be interested in trying to do something similar in the future.”

Arlington League Sponsors Forum on Medicaid Expansion

“The Economic Impact of Medicaid Expansion,” a September forum on the subject of the economic and health consequences of not expanding Medicaid coverage in Virginia was sponsored by LWV-Arlington and co-sponsored by the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Interfaith Center for Public Policy and the League of Women Voters of Falls Church. The event drew 50 participants.

Five speakers presented information about the benefits of Medicaid expansion, each from their separate sectors of the economy. Speakers were Massey Whorley from the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis; Joseph Flores, Deputy Secretary for Virginia’s Department of Health and Human Resources Secretariat (both came from Richmond to participate); Sheila Ryan from the Arlington Free Clinic; Joseph Vidulich from the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce; and Mary Margaret Whipple, Regional Director for Community and Member Outreach at the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association.

According to LWV-Arlington’s President Kristin Goss, “What could have been a very dry discussion of a complex subject was both entertaining and informative due to the skill and knowledge of our speakers. The panelists were fantastic - concise and compelling.”

This event was videotaped, will be posted on Youtube, The link is https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCguL3mjFMSb5In_JwxieeRA They have uploaded the event in three parts, as well as in its entirety.

Goss added, “We hope that the video from the panel will help inform advocates and policymakers in the continued push to close the coverage gap, which affects tens of thousands of Virginians.”

Arlington will also hold an Advocacy Training session on Sunday, November 8 to prepare for the 2016 Virginia General Assembly. For more information, see their website, www.lwv-arlingtonva.org

Fairfax League Broadcasts “Meet and Greet” Events

Our first ventures into broadcasting came on August 31 and September 28, when we enabled voters to view the candidates live on Channel 10 from home and study their positions on video posted on our website throughout the campaign. Jim Southworth, the producer of the Inside Scoop programs on the Fairfax Public Access TV station, also videotaped the district events and posted them on our website and on YouTube. He did a great job for us as you can see if you look at the 2015 “Meet and Greets” on our website <http://lwvfa.org>



Ann Kantor moderates a “Meet and Greet” session for at-large candidates to the school board at Madison High School in Vienna.

Richmond League Registers College Students

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College voter registration tables were another Richmond League success, reports Jacqueline Wade, Voter Service Director. Between the two campuses, more than 25 students were registered and a number of students asked about restoration of rights. Thank you Carol Stephens, Catherine Kasko, Mabel Wells, Elizabeth Smith and Evelyn Glazier.

Greater Richmond Transportation Company has continued the signage of “Are You Registered to Vote” on buses and on election day the buses will have “VOTE, It’s Your Right!” Thank you Virginia Cowles for attending the GRTC transportation meeting.



Richmond League President Mary Crutchfield (on left) and Lynn Johnston are ready to register college students.

During Domestic Violence Awareness Month, League Resolves to Close Lethal Loophole

By Dianne Blais and Lois Page, Co-Presidents of the League of Women Voters of Virginia

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. By the end of the month 48 women in America will have been murdered with guns used by a current or former boyfriend or husband. Behind this number are human lives irretrievably lost -- a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend or neighbor. We should never lose sight of the pain and grief behind the statistics.

Domestic violence and gun violence thrives when we are silent. The combination of the two results in death and injury for far too many women – Virginia women, American women.

Conversations about gun violence frequently occur after tragedies. Each of us makes a decision to either stand on the sidelines or to engage in making change. The League of Women Voters of Virginia has decided. The League of Women Voters of Virginia voted unanimously at the Convention in May to support a resolution to advocate strongly for laws in Virginia that can help prevent domestic abusers and stalkers from purchasing, accessing or possessing firearms. Awareness is not enough. We will now use our statewide network of activists to advocate and lobby for closing the existing lethal loopholes in Virginia law that allow domestic abusers to possess firearms.

To read the full article go to http://lwv-va.org/files/press-release_2015_18_10_octdomesticviolenceawareness-month_bliapage.docx

LWV-VA Establishes a Statewide “Firearms Safety Task Force” to Prevent Easy Access to Firearms by Domestic Abusers and Stalkers

By Ruth Hoffman, Task Force Member



This past May, representatives assembled at the 2015 League of Women Voters of Virginia Convention and unanimously passed a resolution to take action to prevent domestic abusers and stalkers from purchasing, accessing, or possessing firearms. LWV-VA will now advocate and lobby for stronger laws. Implementation of the resolution starts now with the establishment and mobilization of a statewide task force, referred to as the “Firearms Safety Task Force”.

Other states are taking action - Virginia should too. In 2014, six states, Minnesota, Louisiana, Washington, Wisconsin, Vermont and New Hampshire, passed laws banning the possession of firearms by domestic abusers. In 2015, laws passed in five more states, Oregon, South Carolina, Alabama, Nevada and Maine.

Firearms Safety Task Force

Co-Captains of the Firearms Safety Task Force are Fairfax League members Ruth Hoffman and Judy Helein. They are ready to form the Team - will you join?

- The Task Force needs a statewide team of League activists, “staff,” strategists, writers, voices, persuaders, researchers, and grassroots lobbyists.
- The Task Force will help coordinate and organize the League’s efforts to take action through advocacy and lobbying as well as provide talking points, updates, and facilitate the flow of information. Actions will include engaging candidates through candidate forums, participating in Lobby Day and calling legislators to voice our support for legislation during the General Assembly.

Which League members will join this “Firearms Safety Task Force”? Will you?

If you are interested in participating in, or receiving updates, please contact Ruth Hoffman at rhoffman.virginia@gmail.com and Judy Helein at judithhelein@aol.com

For More Information about the Risks, See the February 2015 LWV-FA VOTER

The LWV-FA Voter provided significant research and background on the correlation between mass shootings and domestic violence and other startling statistics. Among the findings were the following:

- Nine American women are shot and killed each week by their husband or intimate partner.
- The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of homicide by 500%.
- The majority of mass shootings (four or more people killed in the same incident) involve domestic violence

Gun Safety, Gun Etiquette, and Gun Storage

Protocols everyone should know and follow.

- 57% of mass shootings involved a shooter killing an intimate partner or other family members. One study showed 2.5 children, on average, were among the victims.

- To read the full article, go to http://lww-va.org/files/firearms_2015_21_09_statefirearmstaskforceformed_hoffman.docx ms.

Voter Turnout for Elections Is Declining

By Sharone Lathrop, Pat Nelson-Douvelis, Susan Cowart, Mary Jane Cleary, LWVFA

In Virginia, elections are held every year in November. The progression of the election is as follows: Year 1 is for Governor (last held in 2013) and House of Delegates; Year 2: the U.S. Congress (2014); Year 3: the Virginia Legislature and statewide and local offices (2015); and Year 4: President, U.S. Congress (2016) and the entire Virginia General Assembly.

This year, 2015, in a Year-3 election, Virginia voters will elect officials who will have direct influence on their lives: transportation, schools funding, property tax rates, etc. Turnout in Year-3 elections has been falling for 30 years. In Fairfax County there will be candidates for 52 offices, but less than 30 percent of eligible voters in Virginia, including Fairfax County, will likely go to the polls to cast a ballot and select leaders for the next four years. This is not a new phenomenon. The trend in the percentage of registered voters who actually voted in presidential vs. other elections is especially low in Year-3 elections (2003, 2007, 2011).

In the last Virginia Year-3 election (2011), few seats were

seriously contested. The combination of winner-take-all rules, incumbent advantages and gerrymandering led many representatives to run unopposed, leaving only one-third of races contested, most of which were in Northern Virginia. A mid-October 2011 poll done by Christopher Newport University found that 70 percent of registered voters were paying “little” to no attention to the November 2011 elections. With two-thirds of races uncontested that year, voters already knew who the winner would be before they voted, and had more incentive not to show up on Election Day.



Throughout most of Virginia, the General Assembly elections this November will be a “mere formality.” The lack of competition is noteworthy in the House of Delegates, where 62 of 100 seats are uncontested. It will be more competitive in the State Senate: Democrats and Republicans are competing to control a majority of the 40 State Senate seats, 23 of which will have more than one candidate on the ballot. The percentage of contested seats is down slightly from the Year -3 election in 2011. In Fairfax, 3 of the 9 Supervisor positions are uncontested as are 3 of the 9 District School Board positions and the Commonwealth’s Attorney position.

Virginia Gwathmey Young Epitomized League Membership; Foundation Continues to Fund League Projects

By John H. Young

Virginia Gwathmey Young served as League President for two terms between 1987 and 1991. She also served as a registered lobbyist for the League before the Virginia General Assembly and as a long time moderator of the Women's Roundtable, which met during the General Assembly sessions.

A hallmark of her tenure as League President was the emphasis on grassroots organization. In her President's Column in the fall 1989 issue of *The Virginia Voter*, she reaffirmed that the "League is a grassroots organization." Later in the winter edition that same year she wrote:

We continually use the phrase 'grass roots' and 'you can make a difference.' We take pride in the fact that our actions are based on positions we adopt after study and member consensus. We are strong as we speak, knowing that we have an informed membership.

In her first speech as President of the League she said that the League must: "Continue to speak out on issues that touch the very fabric of the well being of all citizens."

Virginia came from an old line Virginia family, but never shied away from wanting to do new things. She was a teacher, an urban planner and county executive. She served in the United States Marine Corps as an officer in World War II. After the war, she was an elected member of the Alexandria Democratic Committee and an active member of the League in Alexandria. In 1951, as Chair of Voter's Services for the League, she compiled a "*Voter Guide*," which was published by a group of eleven civic and community associations in Alexandria.

Later she would become active in the League's Fairfax Area and in 1985 was the author of the League's publication: *Budget Tracking: How to find Your Way Through a Local Budget*." She later served on the state board as fiscal policy chair, first vice-president/action coordinator and lobbyist.

She was in many ways the epitome of a member of

the League and took pride in being recognized, as one Richmond newspaper reported, as someone who went about the League's work "Carrying Quiet Clout."

Virginia received degrees from George Washington University in Political Science and in Public Administration and Urban & Regional Planning.

Note: Written by John (Jack) H. Young (Virginia Gwathmey Young's son) in response to a March 25, 2009 request from Olga Hernandez, LWV-VA President. It was requested for inclusion in the LWV-VA's publication marking the 100th anniversary of the Equal Suffrage League in Virginia.

[Ed note: The Virginia Gwathmey Young Foundation, administered by her daughter Rebecca Young Marquardt, has funded a number of League publications over the years, including several editions of our Legislative Directory.]

Honor Special People On LWV-VA's Honor Roll

Your state Board decided in July to make it possible for Virginia Leaguers to honor special people in their lives by donating in their names to a special **LWV-VA Honor Roll**. Every upcoming *Voter* will mention the names of the honorees, and include a brief tribute from the donor. Then at yearend events, honorees will be listed in the program. No need to confine donations just "to the memory of." Birthdays, anniversaries, special event are all good reasons.

Our inaugural honoree is the late Dorothy Jones of Waynesboro. Lulu Meese has given a donation to a "dear and loyal friend for her dedicated work to Waynesboro Boards for LWV and also her service on LWV-VA Boards. Dorothy was unique in her love and support of the League. My life has been diminished by her death."

An easy way to donate is to follow the directions on our website—<http://lwv-va.org/donate1.html>. You can include your tribute on a mailed form, or use PayPal. If using the latter, click on the Ed Fund button, make your contribution and then click OK. This will bring up a second screen allowing you to enter special instructions to us. Use this block to name your honoree and include your tribute. All funds donated will be used for voter service educational activities. Donations in any amount will be accepted.

Wylecia Wiggs Harris to Lead League of Women Voters as Executive Director

Washington, D.C. – The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) announced today that



Wylecia Wiggs Harris has been named as its new executive director. Dr. Harris brings on September 1 the League many years of seasoned leadership experience, a passion for organizational development and a commitment to excellence. As executive director, Dr. Harris will be building on strategies and relationships that advance some of the most foundational political principles of our nation.

Dr. Harris comes to the League after 11 years at the American Nurses Association Enterprise serving as chief operating officer for the American Nurses Association (ANA), the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and the American Nurses Foundation (ANF), and previously as chief of staff/special projects officer for the ANA. Among her most significant achievements at the ANA were the transformation of the association’s Race for Relevance, the launch of the Leadership Institute and the reorganization of the American Nurses Foundation. With more than 25 years of diverse association experience, Dr. Harris brings strong relationship management skills and a proven track record in successfully building and establishing organizations by providing leadership and vision for staff, volunteers and members.

“I am thrilled that Wylecia will be bringing her talents and leadership acumen to the League of Women Voters,” said Elisabeth MacNamara, president of the League of Women Voters of the U.S. “Her considerable skills in guiding organizations and setting a strategic vision and roadmap for the future will be incredible assets to the League. Wylecia comes to the League at this exciting and important time as we celebrate 95 years and look toward our 2020 centennial. I am confident that with Wylecia at the helm, we will reach new heights.”

Dr. Harris’s many executive achievements include serving as the executive director for both the Center for American Nurses and Sister to Sister – Everyone Has a Heart Foundation, a national organization supporting women’s health issues and heart disease education. She also served for 17 years with the American Heart Association in positions at the local, regional and national levels.

An Invitation to Read . . .

Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America

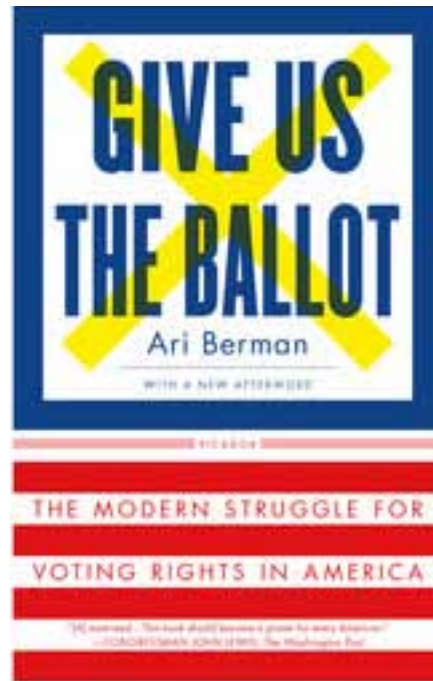
Book Review By Carol Noggle, Legislative Director

[Ed.Note: League members will find great material in recent books for discussions about voting rights.]

Wait a Minute! Don’t we already Have the Ballot? The 1965 VRA took care of that, right?

The path of the VRA since 1965 chronicled by Berman is like a balloon lofted and then deflated with dangerous “pin pricks” that need constant repairing to prevent another fall. The principal players trying to control the VRA balloon’s trajectory include members of the Department of Justice (Don’t they protect the law?), Attorneys General, Supreme Court Justices, Presidents, heroes, advocates and opponents.

To day, Supreme decision *County v.* do we still ballot? we do, it? What ballot like in 2015



after the Court in *Shelby Holder*, have the And, if what is on does a look Virginia when

gerrymandered House Districts do not even provide a choice for many voters?

Some highlights here are intended to entice you to read more.

- Berman describes a “revolt” in the Civil Rights Division of DOJ when there was lax implementation of the VRA in 1970 and 1971. He describes the 1970 reauthorization of the VRA then as a major

blow to President Nixon's southern strategy and that the DOJ was the most politicized in history. It considered a plan from Mississippi to require re-registration of every voter in a third of the counties after redistricting just before the 1971 election. The Los Angeles Times called it a "palpable fraud." At the same time Jimmy Carter, as Governor of Georgia, revealed his progressive views in the South by deputizing every high school principal in the state to register voters.

- VRA support was rising when the 1975 amendment extended the Act for seven years and included bilingual requirements. When running for President in 1976 Carter promised to automatically register every U.S. citizen so that he could put John Lewis "out of business." He won the election with the help of over 90 per cent of the black votes.
- "The Counterrevolution" section reports the disturbances in support of reauthorization of the VRA in the early 1980s with debates over Section 2 and Section 5 when "color-blindness" was controversial and considered a solution to inequalities.
- Resistance to federal intervention and the language-minority protections was strong during the 2005-2006 debates to reauthorize the VRA. Congressmen Sensenbrenner and John Lewis were a strong pair of debaters in support of the extension with Sensenbrenner stating, "We need the Voting Rights Act because in the last 25 years the covered jurisdictions have not come clean." It took seven hours of debate before the House passed the bill.
- Berman continues to tell the story of the precarious survival of the VRA through the June 2013 decision by SCOTUS to invalidate Section 4 of the VRA. He states that the court's opinion "...turned Section 5 into a zombie, a body with no life in it." Berman also

traces the participation of Chief Justice Roberts in voting law issues from the 2000 Bush-Gore election decided by the Supreme Court to his numbing majority opinion in *Shelby County v. Holder*.

- That does not end the story, as we know, so he adds the section, "After Shelby", describing renewed civil rights activism to overcome the quickly-drafted state legislative proposals intended to restrict access to the ballot.
- Hence, "Give Us the Ballot" is an appropriate title.

Review of "Give Us the Ballot" by Congressman John Lewis on September 10, 2015

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/john-lewis-how-we-won-and-are-losing-the-right-to-vote/2015/09/10/5f77e644-50bc-11e5-933e-7d06c647a395_story.html

Congressman John Lewis, who is often quoted throughout this book, reviewed the book calling it a "must-read" book about the continuing struggle for the equal right to vote and that Berman's history is written "without passion or favoritism." Lewis states that the VRA must now be fixed.

Hans von Spakovsky, whose role in the Bush era Department of Justice is described by Berman, wrote a letter to the editor of the Washington Post that countered some of Lewis's criticisms of the DOJ. He defended his own work in the DOJ saying that there was no evidence that they "...improperly refused to enforce the voting rights laws."

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/former-justice-dept-official-book-review-skewed-voting-rights-record/2015/09/13/c9a9beea-58a3-11e5-9f54-1ea23f6e02f3_story.html

A companion book for further reading about the role of the Supreme Court in voting rights is "Uncertain Justice: The Roberts Court and the Constitution" by Laurence Tribe and Joshua Matz.



VOTE!!
Democracy is NOT a Spectator Sport
League of Women Voters

Taking Another Look . . .

Virginia's Public Assistance Agency Compliance with National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) Section 7 (Voter Registration Agencies)

by Therese Martin, Former Public Advocacy for Voter Protection Coordinator, LWV-Va

The “Eureka Moment” came in early February when I visited my local public assistance office to check out the availability of voter registration forms and to see if any staff might be available to discuss why clients seem to be uninterested in registering to vote. I was trying to determine why the voter registration statistics reported on the Virginia Department of Elections web site showed such a nosedive in applications reported from public assistance agencies over the past two years. [It had taken the League's preparation of a summary report of monthly totals to see the steep decrease.]

The moment came when I saw the poster reading: “Don't wait in line – Apply online!” I knew from our previous paper in 2012 that the source of the statistics from public assistance agencies were paper voter registration forms completed by clients in Virginia's Department of Social Services (DSS) offices and periodically placed and taken in specially-coded envelopes to general registrars. A quick e-mail follow-up with county DSS staff verified that my hunch was on the right track: if clients did not come into the office, it was very unlikely that they were going to be completing and bringing in a form to be counted.

During the month that followed, I checked further into issues regarding the availability of voter registration opportunities in Virginia's public assistance offices, including online training taken by DSS staff, the possible relevance of Census data to differences in participation in several parts of the Commonwealth, and the availability of forms and posters in DSS offices. Members of local Leagues helped by visiting the (total of 21) offices in their areas and reporting back to me. I also received informal comments of DSS staff about possible reasons for the low completion of voter registration forms by their clients.

One fact was clear: as the use of online contacts with their clients increased, the number of paper registration forms submitted by the agencies decreased.

One of the side issues of particular interest to Fairfax County members is the effect of the Voting Rights Act requirement that the County now provide voting information in Spanish. We are familiar with the action taken by the County's Office of Elections, but will be looking for the relationship and implementation of that language requirement for all other Virginia offices, including the DSS, that provide voting information to their clients in that jurisdiction.

Since completing the paper in late March, we have communicated our findings to the Virginia Departments of Elections and Social Services and had a quick review in person with the Commissioner of Elections. Our concern is not only that the reporting procedure designed to enable monitoring of the compliance of DSS offices with the NVRA is no longer effective with the growing use of online and telephone rather than in-person contact with clients.

We are also concerned about the sufficiency of new modules and processes to ensure compliance with the Act. Other states have been faced with the same situation and taken steps that Virginia might replicate, although some changes in the Code may be required. On the positive side, we were pleased to learn that the new technology has enabled the DSS to collect some data regarding the voter registration wishes of its clients, including the fact that their initial analysis showed that 22 percent of their clients stated they were already registered to vote.

We anticipate that issuance of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission survey for 2014 will elicit further investigation of the actions of public assistance agencies with regard to NVRA compliance. Meanwhile, to learn what we have discovered about Virginia thus far, see our report on the League's website: <http://www.lwv-va.org/PAVP.html>. While our PAVP project may be ended, I suggest that the LWV-VA continue to monitor the situation.

June 11, 2015