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**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF VIRGINIA**

# ***The Virginia Voter Express***

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## **Leaguers Make Big Impression In General Assembly**

Virginia leaguers can be proud of the heightened activity in view during the current General Assembly. We don't have a final report yet, but it was obvious that the WLRT's had much increased attendance and the impressive number of Action Alerts and legislative visits were very much in evidence.



One of our coalition partners said: "The League is really influential and several legislators, this morning [Feb. 17] alone, have mentioned the impact you all have had on their thought process around legislation."

We can rejoice in the defeat of SJ 223, the constitutional amendment that took away much of the Governor's ability to restore voting rights to returning felons. It failed in the House Privileges and Elections Committee for lack of a second to a motion to report it to the whole House. That way, no one had to have a vote recorded. This had been on our list of top priorities to defeat.

Another positive: The proof of citizenship bill (HB1598) was referred to the Senate Courts of Justice Committee where, for lack of a second, it died). We still are a little hopeful about limiting the number of days K-3 students can be suspended. (HB1536)

We are still hoping for good news on funding for the Department of Elections. Increased funding is needed to improve the technology associated with registering to vote through the DMV, among other things.

Keep your eye on a number of ill-considered bills that we hope the Governor vetoes: the bill (HB1428) to

require a photo with an absentee ballot application (to be matched with nothing); a bill to require local registrars to take on the expense of researching new registrants' Social Security numbers (SB1581); a bill to squelch any attempt by Virginia cities—none of which have done so-- to declare themselves unwilling to enforce Federal immigration laws (HB2000)—not passed yet as of this writing.

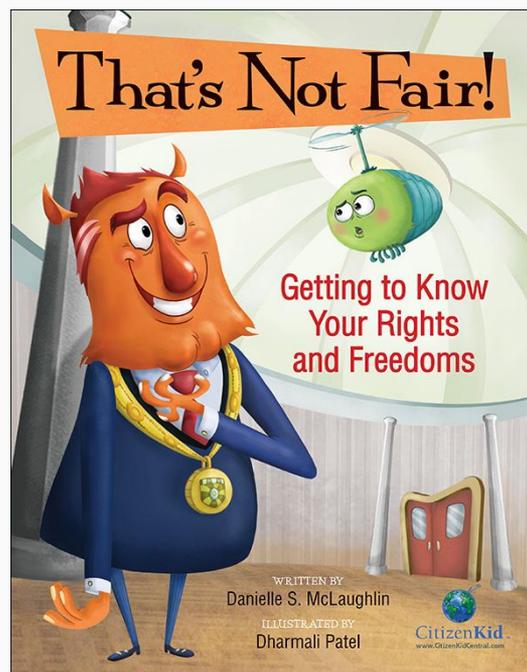
Keep up the good work and plan on showing similarly increased involvement with next year's GA session. Our mission continues.

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## **Book Review . . .**

# ***That's Not Fair! Getting to Know Your Rights and Freedoms, by Danielle S. McLaughlin.***

<http://www.kidscanpress.com/products/thats-not-fair>



If you are looking for a way to open a conversation with children about democracy, rights and freedoms, and good government, I highly recommend *That's Not Fair!*

Mayor Moe and the City Councillors want to pass good laws, but they hurry and don't think things through. Six chapters explore different civil rights with timely issues: religious freedom to dress a certain way, the right not to be searched when there's no reason to be suspected, the right to expect that laws will increase our safety, the right to say things people don't like, the right to gather in a group to protest, and the right of a particular group of people to not be treated differently.

Each five-page chapter is heavily illustrated with a variety of goofy-looking creatures serving as the townsfolk. Councillor Bug is the unheeded voice of caution, who also begins and ends the book. As you may note from the spelling of Councillor, this book is from Canada and relies on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights rather than the US Bill of Rights. Nevertheless, all the rights are familiar except the right to “Life, Liberty, and Security.”

At the end of each chapter are three questions for discussion. What were the Councillors trying to accomplish? Did their law work? Did it cause anything unexpected? As a foundation for discussion, this book should be fun to share with school age children. The three questions are deceptively simple, but they get to the heart of good government, fairness, and the dangers of unintended consequences. They encourage children to think about trade-offs – what will I have to give up to get what I want. They will help children make sense of US and global political issues. That right to security, for example, shows how people in other democracies may have different expectations.

Review by Carolyn Caywood, retired from Virginia Beach Public Library

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# Be Aware of the Need for Inclusiveness in All Activities

We recently encountered a situation where a disabled non-League member desired to listen in on a forum via a conference call. The people running the forum made arrangements for this to take place, but the effort fell short and the call in was not successful. This led to a telephone call to the state office and a 45-minute conversation.

The League has a very specific policy (in part): “The League of Women Voters of Virginia, in both its values and practices, is committed to inclusion and diversity. This means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of economic position, gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.”

When aware of a special needs situation will exist at a meeting, leaders need to make the arrangements, test the system before the session begins and follow up afterwards. One convenient way to accomplish this is to assign one person the total responsibility for ensuring it comes off without a hitch. In the case mentioned above, providing a separate cell phone number of the designated person would have solved the problem.

Keep in mind, we must attempt to make reasonable accommodations for the disabled. It will not happen often, but we need to be ready to give it our best when it arises.



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*The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging informed and active participation in government. It influences public policy through education and advocacy.*

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