

**Women's Legislative Roundtable
Fourth Floor East Conference Room
February 24, 2016**

LWV-VA Co-President Lois Page opened the meeting at 8:30am.

Delegate Bill DeSteph [R-8th] was the first speaker. He said that there have been a lot of voting bills this year. He said, "The League of Women Voters has a very strong voice, so make sure you use that voice." He added that it is important to study the bills carefully because some bills can be changed from good to bad with just two words." He also talked about some bills that have been changed many times, for example, **Senator Carrico's** bill, **SB4041**.

One of **Senator Surovell's** bills had a substitute that was 30 pages long. **Del. DeSteph** said, "I think it's lunatic that we're given bills and not enough time to read them." He also complained that one bill had medieval latin in it.

Delegate Steve Heretick [D-79th]

Delegate Heretick said, "Everything you do on the local level is impacted by what happens here in the General Assembly." He shared his observations as a freshman. The first was the sheer volume of legislation to deal with. He said, "It is impossible to manage, and this is the long Session!" The second observation was the strong partisanship that exists in the General Assembly. The third was the professionalism and good will of legislators.

He said he was going to leave the G.A. in the afternoon in order to observe the voter I.D. case which was in trial across the street. He commented, "The more barriers we enact the more we obstruct the voters access." He continued, "It is just as bad as a poll tax. Creating barriers is not what I am here to do."

When asked about any bills he is patron of he said **HB1347** is a bill that redefines wireless infrastructure.

Delegate Vivian Watts [D-39th]

Delegate Watts began with the statement, "I regard working on the local level as a weekly poker game whereas working on the state level is more like a chess game. It's the ongoing institutional memory that is important." Then she stated that Medicaid Expansion has been rejected on the House side. She talked about Virginia's corporate income tax which is 6% and said that North Carolina is working on reducing their Corporate income tax so they will be competing with Virginia for more business. She said it would be nice if Virginia could lower its corporate income tax rate but that is not possible. She said, "We are not able to do it. Why? Because we didn't accept Medicaid Expansion."

Delegate Sam Rasoul [D-11th]

Delegate Rasoul said that legislators are in the middle of dealing with the budgets, the general funds and non general funds. He expressed disappointment with the rejection of Medicaid Expansion. He said that in Colorado where Medicaid Expansion was accepted, they are using funds for a program that reduces pregnancies among young women.

He shared that all the Senate redistricting bills were killed the day before. He said that ethics bills were in the Courts of Justice Committee. He said, "I was against most of the ethics bills because they are all smoke and mirrors. They are not real ethics reform.

Now we have to talk about real ethics reform: redistricting and campaign finance reform."

Secretary Nancy Rodrigues

Secretary Rodrigues came for a brief visit to talk about the Womens Monument Project that will be built in Capitol Square. This monument will feature 12 bronze statues of Virginia women with a wall encircling

them that will be inscribed with names of other notable women. She said they are seeking names for the wall, and they need to raise another \$3 million to build it. She handed out cards with a drawing of the monument and information. To make a donation you can go to womensmonumentcom.virginia.gov

Secretary Rodrigues said she had two concerns about the budgets. She said there is no money for amendments and there is no money for answering calls for the next elections.

Delegate Alfonso Lopez [D49th]

Delegate Lopez stated that he is the first Latino democrat elected to the General Assembly and he has drafted 41 bills. He talked about some of his bills.

HB971 is a bill that deals with small businesses and implementation certification programs. Del Lopez said that the way the guidelines for small businesses are set up now, they are too broad and that women owned and minority owned businesses get hurt. He said this bill got all the way to the third reading on the floor and then was killed.

HB976 is a bill that increases penalties given by environmental boards for violations.

HB977 is a bill that requires anyone that discharges toxic substances into state waters to notify the State Water Control Board, the Department of Environmental Quality, or the coordinator of emergency services within 12 hours. The bill also requires that the report be made available to the public through newspapers, T.V. stations and radio stations.

The roundtable was adjourned promptly at 9:30am. as there was another group waiting to get into the room.

Notes taken by Mary Crutchfield, RMA