

WLRT 2/15/17 Notes

Notes by Mary Crutchfield (RMA)

Co-Chair Lois Page called the meeting with a few remarks about how the League efforts we proceeding, Over 60 attendees were present including a contingent representing a family life education organization.

Sam Rasoul, 11th District, City of Roanoke

A lot of redistricting bills were killed this year. There are many people on record for voting against. He proposed several bills that would shake up the whole system, two of which were:

- Open primaries
- Term limits (make the limit 12 years) for both House and Senate. Is enough time to take advantage of expertise but keeps it from becoming a lifelong career.

In order to deal with the many legislative issues, we need to have a good conversation. This is not possible if the election is not competitive. When asked if there was support for open primaries in VA, Delegate Rasoul responded that it takes years to get new ideas through.

How do we bring more people in to vote? “People have to have something to vote for. Have we looked at our product lately? Give them something to vote for! Any industry that’s controlled by a duopoly doesn’t have incentive for innovation.”

One person asked “I want to hear how you are going to talk to the people.” Rasoul responded, “We have to make the process more democratic. You need to keep process issues first and foremost in what you do.”

Delegate Betsy Carr, 69th District, Part of Richmond City and Chesterfield

What I tell people who come to my office . . .”People in the district have to talk to their representatives. They listen primarily to their own constituents, but also to others talking about items having to do with committees of which they are member.”

She added that the women in the legislature are excited about the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of women’s right to vote. A commission is being formed to put together the celebration. Delegate Kathy Byron has a bill (HB2348) to support the commission that may make it in the Senate. Last year it got hung up over the make up of the commission. She urged us to talk to our Senators.

Vivian Watts, 39th District, Part of Fairfax County

Delegate Watts pointed out one of the problems with our gerrymandered districts, “My role in constituent service is definitely compromised by the way my district has been carved up. No one know who their delegate is. How is anybody going to hold an elected official accountable?”

Watts talked about how local government raises revenue. Cities can raise taxes on products i.e. cigarettes; counties cannot—they can only raise real estate taxes
Tax referendums go down and funding for education K-12 suffers in counties.
Counties need to have the same taxing power as cities

Jennifer Boysko, 86th District Part of Fairfax County and Loudoun

She focused on bills affecting women today, especially equal pay. She mentioned two bills she carried:

- 1 A proposal to codify in law that people should receive equal pay for equal work. It was tabled (killed) quickly in Commerce & Labor and General Laws Committees. HB2314
- 2 She also carried a bill preventing private employers asking past history of a person's pay (which tends to suppress salaries for women). This was also tabled quickly. HB2190

Del Boysko gave an example of the disparity between the pay of the GA Clerks, male & female. Senate Clerk (female) has worked 27 years and is paid \$20,000 less than male clerk in the House with only 7 years on the job.

It is important to have a healthy conversation with your representative. It is the best thing you can do.

Del. Richard Anderson, 51st District, Part of Prince William Co

A question was raised about connecting with Legislators: Legislators tend to gravitate toward issues they have experience in. For Anderson it is military.

What hope do you have for redistricting? He liked the Landes Bill of which he is a co-sponsor. He is not a fan of independent redistricting commissions, but prefers developing hard criteria for drawing districts.

Anderson introduced 10 bills this session and five are still alive

- He tried to broaden the texting while driving bill, co-patroned with Senator George Barker
- He also is carrying a bill that lets the people decide the fate of recalled officials, not judges

When all else fails, any citizen can go the judicial branch for redress.

Del. Eileen Filler-Corn, 41st District, Part of Fairfax Co

Introduced 15 bills and has 7 still alive now

Those killed:

- HB1710: Gun safes; establishes an exemption from retail sales tax.
- HB 2405 Voter registration; extended time for new citizens to register to vote.
- HJ 712 Supporting legislation regarding the Equal Rights Amendment.

Those still going:

- HB 2267 Health benefit plans; allowing coverage for hormonal contraceptives. Prescription can be for 12 months rather than 3
- HB 2404 PANDAS and PANS illness advisory board created
- HB 1709 School boards; policies and procedures prohibiting bullying, parental notification.
- HB 2406 Family life education curricula; instruction shall include personal privacy and personal boundaries.

Del. Kathleen Murphy, 34th District, Part of Fairfax, Part of Loudoun dropped by to give us greetings.