

## THE LWV-VA ESTABLISHES A STATEWIDE “FIREARMS SAFETY TASK FORCE” TO PREVENT EASY ACCESS TO FIREARMS BY DOMESTIC ABUSERS AND STALKERS

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 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 grass-root 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](mailto:rhoffman.virginia@gmail.com) and Judy Helein at [judithhelein@aol.com](mailto: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 husbands 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 - 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.
- Virginia laws lack key measures to help protect victims of domestic violence from firearm injury or death at the hands of their abusers.
  - **Dating Partners**: homicides are increasingly being committed by current and former dating partners. But dating partners are not currently protected.
  - **Stalking**: data show stalking is a predictor of homicide but currently stalking is not included in the firearm prohibition. One study found that nearly 9 in 10 attempted murders of women were preceded by at least one incident of stalking in the year before the attack.
  - **Possession of a firearm**: Virginia does not prohibit firearm **possession** of domestic violence offenders nor authorize or require the removal of firearms.

For more information go here: [http://www.lwv-fairfax.org/files/2015\\_2\\_Fairfax\\_Voter\\_February.pdf](http://www.lwv-fairfax.org/files/2015_2_Fairfax_Voter_February.pdf)

**Families remain at risk when Virginia lawmakers fail to act. Examples of Virginia families devastated through domestic violence shootings:**

- February 2014, Glade Springs (Palmer Family): 5 shot, 4 killed, 1 survivor. (1 child, age 17yrs) “Kevin Palmer shot and killed his wife Kristen, his 17 year old son, Griffin, and his mother-in-law Nancy, and injured his father-in-law, Terry, before turning the gun on himself. Palmer owned nearly 50 firearms...The Sheriff said under the protective order, Palmer wasn’t allowed to have weapons, but there’s no system in place to search the home or make sure the person doesn’t keep their weapons.”
- June 2014 in Chesterfield County (Jernigan Family) 4 shot, 4 killed (2 children, ages 2yrs and 9yrs) “Barry Jernigan, 35, shot his 2-year-old son, Seth, dead as the boy lay in his crib, and also killed his stepdaughter Alexis Kellas, 9, and his wife, Renotta Jernigan, 30, police in Chesterfield said. Renotta and Alexis were able to stumble out of the Fox Maple Terrace home around 10 p.m. Sunday before collapsing in the front yard, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported.”
- August 2014 in Culpepper Virginia (Washington Family) 5 shot, 5 killed (3 children, ages 4, 6 and 13) “Family and friends told authorities the couple had been having an ongoing domestic dispute that apparently grew more heated Saturday night. The bodies of Clarence and Shauna Washington, both 35, and their three daughters -- 4-year-old Olivia, 6-year-old Onya and 13-year-old Omesha -- were found inside their home Sunday night.”
- May 2015 in Chesterfield (Rogers Family): 2 shot, 2 killed (1 child, age 1 year old) “Police found two victims, Morgan R. Rogers, 34, and Leah Rogers, 1, deceased from gunshot wounds. Both victims lived at the residence. Through investigation, detectives identified Stafford L. Shaw Sr., 46, as a suspect in the homicide. Shaw is the estranged boyfriend of Morgan Rogers. He was under an emergency protective order at the time of the shooting.”