

State Council Meeting to Focus on “Things That Matter”



When? Saturday, June 4, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Where? Beautiful retreat center in north Richmond: Virginia Diocesan Center at Roslyn, 8727 River Rd., Richmond, VA 23229

Who? The president or alternate from each local League plus one other local League member will serve as voting delegates at the hour-long business meeting from 10:00 until 11:00, when we will approve the Operating Fund budget and be made aware of annual reports from the Board.

Who else? Every Leaguer is urged to come to network with state-wide Leaguers, pass on guidance to the state board members, AND take part in the engaging program being planned (described below).

Food? Persons arriving up until 10:00 a.m. will be provided with a continental breakfast; a cookie break will occur later in the morning; buffet lunch will be served in the very beautiful retreat center dining room.

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Program/Schedule

9:30-10:00: Registration/ continental breakfast

10:00-11:00: Council business meeting

11:00-12:30: Panel discussion: “Millennials Matter”: four young people from what has become the largest US population age group (18-34) will help us answer questions such as what the League can do to engage their generation as allies in our mission and what tools. Do we need to master to do this?

12:30-1:30: Buffet Lunch and speaker/discussion: “Voting Matters”: in which several voter engagement initiatives will be discussed. Sidney Johnson will speak about “Nonprofit Vote;” and several other engagement initiatives will be introduced. Time for networking as well.

2:00 Breakout sessions,
 1. “Membership Matters” (an issue that always need discussing further). What works? What doesn’t? and
 2. Board Orientation Matters”—As new board members

(Con’t on Page 3, Col.1)



Presidents' Message



First of all, Dianne and Lois hope tons of you will be signing up to come to Council on June 4. Council may have been just a business meeting in the past, but we are taking advantage of this otherwise required gathering to cover topics on which all of us can share successful strategies.

Council will be in a beautiful retreat center where we have held state conventions in the past. If you would like to stay over the night before, call Lynn Johnston, 804- 938-0206 who has been handling all the arrangements.

A highlight of the day for us will be the panel of young people who have agreed to give us some insights into the civic engagement interests of their peer group, the largest population bubble in the country, the 18 to 34 years olds. We need these folks as allies in our long-time League mission, but we cannot engage them by doing things exactly the way we always have. What do we need to do?

Frances Schutz and Sue Lewis have arranged for a series of workshop in the afternoon that everyone should be able to find helpful: program, membership, board training, using social media are all on the agenda. Finally, Olga Hernandez will give us some pointers on how to handle the LWVUS convention two weeks later.

Speaking of the US convention, if you haven't attended one of those, you are truly missing the Big Picture of our national impact. We hope all of our local Leagues will be able to send your full delegation. We need to decide RIGHT NOW because the hotel is filling up. This is what the latest information from National says:

Convention registration increases by leaps and bounds each week! Please don't delay making your arrangements. TODAY it's time to [register](#) for convention AND most important, [reserve your hotel room](#). **The League's room block at MarriottWardman Park Hotel will reach capacity before online convention registration closes, so act quickly to secure a room at the League rate.** If an overflow hotel is needed, it will be announced in a future League Update communication.

Already have your room, now in search of a roommate? Post your notice on the Convention 2016 Google Group. Sign

up for the [Google Group here](#), and use it to connect with other convention goers on ALL convention-related topics.

Please let Lois or Dianne know who your delegates will be. If you cannot fill your delegate slots., we need to know as several state board members would still like to go. If you would like to volunteer, information about doing so can be found later in this newsletter. We suspect several northern Virginia Leaguers can provide B and B accommodations for those farther away, so let us know if needed.

LWV-VA does not have any staff. Many states have an executive director AND assistants. We should not rely on volunteers for everything. But, we need money so a development committee has been formed. If you have any ideas of fund-raising events or corporate ties that could bring in money let us know! Many members of the board (including both co-presidents) are members.

Since becoming co-presidents, Dianne and Lois have become more aware of our coalition partners. One in particular, the Virginia Civic Engagement Table (VCET) offers many programs. I attended their Advocacy Training last year and recommend it. Registration is open - go to <http://www.engageva.org/>. This training is in two parts, on two different days. You can go for both days or only one (Saturday, July

(Con't. on p.3, col.2)

LWV-VA The Virginia Voter 2015 - 2016

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

Please e-mail address corrections to the office

Supreme Court Rejects Challenge to Meaning of “One Person One Vote”

By ADAM LIPTAK, APRIL 4, 2016
New York Times

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court unanimously ruled on Monday that states may count all residents, whether or not they are eligible to vote, in drawing election districts. The decision was a major statement on the meaning of a fundamental principle of the American political system, that of “one person one vote.”

“We hold, based on constitutional history, this court’s decisions and longstanding practice, that a state may draw its legislative districts based on total population,” Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote for the court. As a practical matter, the ruling mostly helped Democrats and upheld the status quo. But until this decision, the court had never resolved whether

voting districts should contain roughly the same number of people or the same number of eligible voters. Counting all people amplifies the voting power of places that have large numbers of residents who cannot vote legally — including immigrants who are here legally but are not citizens, illegal immigrants and children. Those places tend to be urban and to vote Democratic.

Had the justices required that only eligible voters be counted, the ruling would have shifted political power from cities to rural areas, a move that would have benefited Republicans. The case concerned a clash between two theories of representative democracy. One seeks to ensure “representational equality,” with elected officials tending to the interests of the same number of people, whether they are voters or not. The other tries to ensure that only those who have political power in the form of a vote control the government. To see the article in its entirety, go to : http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/05/us/politics/supreme-court-one-person-one-vote.html?_r=0



LEARN TO LEAD MEETINGS
LIKE A PARLIAMENTARIAN



Sunday, May 22, 2016@4 p.m.

Arlington Public Library: Auditorium in the Central Library

Central Library
1015 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, VA
Time: 4-5:30 p.m.

Join the League of Women Voters of Arlington and Arlington’s Central Library to learn about running effective meetings.

and community activists resources to run successful meetings--just in-time for the 2016 Election frenzy.



This workshop, with thoughtful entertainment and streamlined meeting tools, will give civic leaders, club members,

To learn more about this workshop, please contact Amy Hjerstedt amy.hjerstedt@gmail.com www.lwv-arlingtonva.com

(Council Mtg. con’t from Page 1)

2. “Board Orientation Matters”—As new board members are about to take over, what sort of orientation will lead to the best results?

2:45

1. “Social Media Matters”—If we want to be relevant, we need to get our message out in ways that people we want to reach are using

2. “Program Matters”—What does a useful and engaging League-sponsored program look like? Should our programs concentrate on advancing the League mission?

3:30 Olga Hernandez will brief national convention delegates as to what to expect and how to effectively use their time at the convention.

(Presidents’ Message. con’t from Page 2)

23rd, 9:00 - 4:30 in Richmond or Sunday, August 20th, 10:00 4:30 in Norfolk). It’s free and interesting. Another option on the VCET website is Camp Wellstone, two days on intensive training in strategies for running a campaign of any sort (think voter registration) or becoming a candidate. Dates are May 13-15 and some scholarship money is available.

Much is happening in the area of voter service. You can read about the high school initiative here but much else is being considered. Council will provide some updates.



Call to Council
League of Women Voters of Virginia
2016 BIENNIAL COUNCIL MEETING
Saturday, June 4, 2016

Virginia Diocesan Center at Roslyn
8727 River Road, Richmond, VA 23229

9:00 a.m.—Continental breakfast and registration

10:00 a.m. Council Business Session

(Each local League is expected to send two voting delegates, plus as many other members as desired, to help conduct the business of LWV-VA in the year between state conventions.)

11:00 a.m. Panel Discussion - "Millennials Matter"

Young civic activists will lead a discussion on what the League can do to engage their generation as allies in our mission and what tools we need to master in order to communicate. The panel will include Alex Chandler, State Director of Inspire Virginia; Rachel Beatrice, Capital News Service; Emily Imhoff, with NOW and WIN; Brandon Duong, VCU student activist.

12:30 p.m.—Luncheon and Discussion of "Voting Matters"

2:00 Breakout Sessions: Membership Matters and Board Orientation Matters

2:45 Breakout Sessions: Social Media Matters and Program Matters

3:30 What to Expect When You Attend the National Convention

***** cut here to mail *****

I plan to attend these two breakout sessions:

- 2:00 p.m. - Membership Matters
2:00 p.m. - Board Orientation Matters
2:45 p.m. - Social Media Matters
2:45 p.m. - Program Matters

Registration (including lunch) is \$45

Deadline for Registration is May 20, 2016

Make checks payable to LWV-VA and mail with form to
12 Georgetown Green, Charlottesville, VA 22901

Name: _____ Registration(s) @ \$45 each_____

League Affiliation: _____ Delegate? ___Yes ___No

Phone number and email: _____ Questions: call Pat at 434-978-4532

NOTE: To pay by credit card, go to http://lww-va.org/donate1.html and click on the General Fund PayPal donate button at the bottom of the page to order your ticket(s). After you place your order, a "Review Donations and Continue" screen will appear. Please indicate if you are an official delegate, your League affiliation and your choice of break out sessions in the "Special Instructions to the Seller" block if appropriate. Click to finalize your payment.

LWVUS to Hold National Convention: “Making Democracy Work - For All!” in the District of Columbia, June 16-19

Leaguers from across the country will descend on the District of Columbia’s Wardman Park Marriott for the biennial convention. They will conduct a business meeting, attend numerous caucuses, network, and have a night with The Capitol Steps to keep them busy and entertained. Although only official delegates may vote on issues, all Leaguers are encouraged to register and attend this informative convention.



Plenary Session floor duties and Wares Market help. The LWVNC site says, “Just check your own schedule, then go to “Sign Up Genius” online and sign up to help at the Convention. You may volunteer for more than one slot, if you can. For questions about Sign Up Genius, email Zaida Arguedas at zaida2015@comcast.net.” Each

person volunteering to work one or moreshifts will receive a free ticket to the Capitol Steps parody.

LWVUS Proposed Program for 2016-2018

1. Based on Program Planning responses, the LWVUS Board recommends retaining all current LWVUS Positions in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy.
2. The LWVUS Board recommends a League-wide Campaign for Making Democracy Work®.

PROPOSED LWVUS PROGRAM FOR 2016-18: CAMPAIGN FOR MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK®

This comprehensive program would build on our accomplishments as part of the 2014-16 Key Structures of Democracy Program. It would engage Leagues nationwide in advancing core democracy issues.

- Voter protection and mobilization
- Election reform
- Money in politics, constitutional amendment and redistricting

including Concurrence on the Floor of Convention with the Redistricting position proposed by the LWVUS Redistricting Task Force:

Volunteers Needed to Host the Event

The host committee is hard at work to make sure it will be a great experience for all delegates and others from near and far and that it will run smoothly because of our own League volunteers. The LWVNC is the host League and we want to give all member Leagues the opportunity to participate in helping to ensure a successful convention.

Anyone can volunteer for a date and time of their convenience by using ‘Sign Up Genius’ which is now live. For each day of the Convention, there are short descriptions of the various 4-5 hour time slots for Hospitality, Information desk, Volunteer Room coverage, Registration/Credentials,

League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area
Presents...

The Capitol Steps

Always **Fresh** And Crispy,
Right From The Headlines!

We put the **MOCK** in Democracy!

Friday, June 17, 2016 7:30 PM

Washington Marriott Wardman Park
Thurgood Marshall Ballroom

Tickets - \$35.00 Online (\$40 at the hotel)

Click to buy your ticket now

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/capitol-steps-tickets-20486478609>

Firearms Fact . . .

The overall cost of firearms violence for the U.S. economy is \$50.4 billion. This figure includes costs for: prisons, security guards, hospitals, doctors and courts.

Felons Now Able to Check Status of Rights Online

A new look-up tool for the restoration of felon rights was announced recently by Kelly Thomasson Mercer, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth. Those who have lost their civil rights will now be able to check the status of their rights restoration on the website: <https://commonwealth.virginia.gov/ror>

The search requires first name, last name, date of birth and social security number. Only people with access to that information will be able to look up the status. Individuals who have had their rights restored will show the date the rights restoration was granted, along with a link to register to vote. If the petition is still being worked on, the site will show a pending status. Petitioners who are ineligible or who require more information to have their file completed will be directed to contact their office (804-663-7761).

Radio Talk Show Takes on Firearms Safety Issues

Kojo Nnamdi, a radio talk show host for WAMU in Northern Virginia, recently featured a speaker who is part of the Gabby Giffords “Americans for Responsible Solutions” gun safety initiative. Several Leaguers recently attended a press conference in Richmond that featured Giffords and her husband Mark Kelley.

Those wishing to listen to the recording of the interview can do so by going to <http://thekojonnamdishow.org/audio/#/shows/2016-04-12/the-political-landscape-around-gun-laws-in-virginia/91384/@00:00>

State League Explores Formation of League in Fredricksburg

Anne Sterling, Local League Outreach Coordinator, announced that an organizational meeting will be held on Thursday, May 19, at the Fredricksburg Regional Library. Fifteen individuals are expected to sign up and begin the steps to officially become a full-fledged League. Sterling said, “We hope to be able to find out what the League could do for the Fredricksburg area. This is an exciting time since several years ago Fredricksburg had an active League.”

Exhibit Honors 100th Anniversary of Women’s Rights Movement

A new exhibit at the Freeman Store and Museum in Vienna, VA, *The Road to Women’s Rights: The Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement*, opened March 2. *The Road to Women’s Rights* will tell the story of the Women’s Rights Movement over the next 5 years through a series of small exhibits. The exhibit series honors the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the National Women’s Party in 1916 and the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution granting women the right to vote in 1920. The first exhibit in the series: *The Origins of the Women’s Rights Movement*, describes the movement from the founding of our nation as it struggled to define voting rights through the beginning of the civil war.

Did you know that initially, New Jersey allowed women to vote? Then when it became clear that other states didn’t, they revoked that right. In 1848 Lucretia Mott was proposed as a Liberty Party candidate for Vice President of the United States even though she could not vote. And Oberlin College was the first to grant a woman a college degree in 1841. Education for women, the right for women to speak to mixed audiences, abolition and the right to own property and control wages were key issues that led to the start of the women’s rights movement. Come visit the exhibit and learn more. The Freeman Store is open 12-4 pm Wednesday-Sunday. For more information, call [703-938-5187](tel:703-938-5187) or visit historicviennainc.org.

This exhibit is the first in a series of exhibits focusing on women’s rights.



The Freeman Store and Museum is located at 131 Church Street NE, Vienna, VA and is open Wednesday through Sunday 12-4 p.m.

Singer-Songwriter Patty Griffin Stresses Get-Out-the-Vote at Three Concerts in Virginia

League of Women Voters South Hampton Roads President Kaye Tice (left) and Development Chair Vicky Greco represented the LWV and LWVSHR for the “Use Your Voice” concert at Ferguson Center (Christopher Newport University) in Newport News on February 25, 2016.

Singer songwriters Patty Griffin, Sara Watkins and Anais Mitchell gave amazing performances and highlighted the work of the League of Women Voters and the importance of voting. In addition to our voter registration/education table, Kaye was invited to center stage just before the concert began to thank the artists and pitch LWV’s message. Grammy award winner Patty Griffin sought out the partnership with LWV for the 39 city tour because of our nonpartisan mission to expand participation in the voting process, to empower women and to give a voice to all Americans. Mary Crutchfield, President of the Richmond Area League, spoke at the Griffin concert held in Richmond and Rebecca Shankman of the Montgomery County League made the remarks at a third concert, held in Roanoke.



LWVL Is Headed Back to College... Lynchburg College!

The LWVL has been afforded an extraordinary and timely opportunity to form a partnership with a class project at Lynchburg College in the Masters in Non-Profit Organizational Development course of study. Here is the project synopsis:



- Each team will analyze a non-profit organization and its current challenges. The team will describe its current organization and describe recommended changes to improve its performance. These changes must be

rooted in current organizational theory. What is the current issue, what is the recommended solution, and why?

- This team will be charged with assisting an organization in Lynchburg with an organizational or management problem. Drawing upon diagnostic techniques covered in class discussions, students will interview organizational stake holders, examine organizational documents, complete a thorough analysis of the problem, and develop concrete strategies for intervention.
- Each team will give a formal and professional presentation of their research to the class. Each team will be encouraged to make a similar presentation to the client after receiving feedback from the colleagues in the class and professor.

Several board members had an introductory meeting with the LC Project Team on Friday, March 18. They provided information on League history, structure, activities, and positions and challenges. The project team is scheduled to report out in late April. How exciting to be a part of this project and hopefully gain some insight in self-improvement!

Firearms Safety Task Force Reports on Progress

By Ruth Hoffman

The League of Women Voters of Virginia established the Firearms Safety Task Force in August 2015, following the approval of a Resolution at the 2015 LWV-VA Convention. Strengthening laws to protect victims of domestic abuse from gun violence is among the priorities. The Task Force quickly amassed a statewide team of League activists, strategists, writers and grassroots lobbyists to advocate and lobby for stronger laws.

Bills seeking better protections have been introduced and rejected by lawmakers for the past several years. This year the LWV-VA's voice was added to the growing chorus demanding stronger laws to protect victims of domestic abuse from gun violence. Through the work of many, a key piece of the Governor's Gun Safety Package will now bar people who are subject to a permanent protection order from possessing a firearm. It will be a felony for such people who fail to turn over their firearms within 24 hours of a judge imposing a protective order - a Class 6 felony that will bar them from owning guns in Virginia for life. *The Washington Post* reported that nearly 5,000 protective orders were issued in 2014 in Virginia.

The work by the Firearm Safety Task Force on this and other gun violence prevention efforts over the past eight months include the following:

- 1) Met with Sen. Barbara Favola and Del. Kathleen Murphy, sponsors of the bills (September 2015)
- 2) Published Letters to the Editor signed by the LWV-VA Co-Presidents during Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October 2015)
- 3) Held a meeting, which included Co-President Lois Page, with Virginia Speaker Bill Howell about protecting victims of abuse from gun violence and subsequently provided him with key advocacy materials (December 2015)
- 4) Issued a letter to President Obama from co-presidents of LWV-VA supporting his Executive Actions on gun violence prevention (December 2015)
- 5) Attended Lobby Day and advocated throughout the General Assembly Session
- 6) Advocated against dangerous bills that would have eliminated application and safety requirements for those applying for concealed carry permits that have protective orders against others - thereby introducing more firearms into volatile situations (the Governor ultimately vetoed those bills on April 7)
- 7) Attended the press conference announcing the establishment of the Virginia Coalition for Common Sense. This new coalition is formed by Americans for Responsible Solutions (group established by former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and husband Mark Kelly). ARS has formed similar coalitions recently in four other states.

The Task Force continues to grow and welcomes those interested in joining to contact Ruth Hoffman at rhoffman.virginia@gmail.com or Judy Helein at judithhelein@aol.com for more information.

Leaguers and Others Participate in Rally in Richmond



to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Governor Terry McAuliffe takes time from his busy schedule, to address about 100 people who showed up to push for Equal Rights for everyone. Rallyers started out on the Capitol steps, but were offered shelter from the rain in one of the meeting rooms in the Patrick Henry Building. Speakers from a variety of organizations urged the Virginia Legislators



Suffragists (including LWV of VA state Co-President Lois Page on right) present at the rally posed for a picture.

LWVUS Position on Money in Politics

[Note: The following is a compilation of the results of the nation-wide study during 2015-2016 as announced by the National Board, April 2016.]

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should:

- Enhance political equality for all citizens;
- Ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process;
- Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns;
- Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices;
- Ensure transparency and the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections;



- Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office;
- Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and
- Combat corruption and undue influence in government.
- The League believes that political corruption includes the following:
 - A candidate or officeholder agrees to vote or work in favor of a donor's interests in exchange for a campaign contribution;
 - An officeholder or staff gives greater access to donors;
 - An officeholder votes or works to support policies that reflect the preferences of individuals or organizations in order to attract contributions from them;

- A candidate or office holder seeks political contributions implying that there will be retribution unless a donation is given; and
- The results of the political process consistently favor the interests of significant campaign contributors.

In order to achieve the goals for campaign finance regulation, the League supports:

- Public financing of elections, either voluntary or mandatory, in which candidates must abide by reasonable spending limits;
- Enhanced enforcement of campaign finance laws that includes changes to ensure that regulatory agencies are properly funded, staffed, and structured to avoid partisan deadlock in the decision-making process;
- Abolishing Super PACs and abolishing spending coordinated or directed by candidates (other than a candidate's own campaign committee); and
- Restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists, which may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.

Until full public financing of elections is enacted, limits on election spending are needed in order to meet the League's goals for protecting democratic processes. Among the different entities that spend money to influence elections, the League supports the following comparative limits:

- Higher spending limits for political parties, genuinely non-partisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote organizations and activities, and candidates spending money raised from contributors;
- Mid-level spending limits for individual citizens (including wealthy individuals), Political Action Committees (with funds contributed by individuals associated with the sponsoring organization, such as employees, stockholders, members and volunteers), and candidates spending their own money;
- Lower spending limits for trade associations, labor unions and non-profit organizations from their general treasury funds;
- Severely restricted spending by for-profit organizations spending from their corporate treasury funds; and
- No limits on spending by bona fide newspapers, television, and other media, including the Internet, except to address partisan abuse or use of the media to evade campaign finance regulations.

Governor McAuliffe Proclaims Virginia High School Student Registration Week: April 24-30

“Governor McAuliffe issued a Proclamation to officially recognize April 24-30, 2016 as Virginia High School Student Registration Week. The purpose of the Proclamation is to encourage high school students and teachers across the Commonwealth to conduct voter registration drives at their schools. All Virginia public high schools are invited to participate in this special statewide voter registration drive. The Virginia Department of Education has partnered with the Department of Elections and other nonprofit and nonpartisan organizations working to encourage eligible youth in the Commonwealth to register to vote in time, not only in the November Presidential Election, but also the June 14 primary elections.

“School specific resources for students and teachers are



A student registers to vote at Princess Anne High School, one of the 12 high schools the South Hampton Roads League plans to visit. Barbara Nesbitt, Yvonne Lewis and Carolyn Caywood of the South Hampton Roads League staff the registration table.

available on the Department of Elections Web site to aid in planning and conducting voter registration efforts. Contact information for partnering organizations and local voter registration offices that may be able to provide support is also available via this dedicated Web page.

“Students are encouraged to participate in the online voter registration drive by visiting www.vote.virginia.gov. Students may also register by completing a registration application and mailing it to either their local registration office or the address printed on the form. The deadline to register for the 2016 General Election is October 13, 2016.



“The November election will be statewide and Virginia citizens will be electing local and federal officials. It is important that all eligible voters exercise their civic responsibility to participate in the election process. When young people register and vote, they are more likely to continue voting. By providing information and encouragement to our

students, we can help shape the next generation of American voters. The Department of Education encourages all high schools to participate in this opportunity to promote civics education and civic responsibility.”

A number of state League board members have attended planning meetings for this project, and Voter Service chairs in local Leagues have been alerted to expect a possible increase in requests for help.

According to Nancy Rodriques, Virginia Secretary of Administration, the governor envisions this as the opening foray into a permanent state-wide observance. The tentative long term plan calls for a challenge to high schools to register the highest percentage of eligible high school students, starting in September and culminating every year during the last week in April. A number of Virginia non-profits involved with Get Out the Vote projects have volunteered to be listed as resources. The hope is that student leadership will become a vital force in this effort.



League members Barbara Nesbitt, Yvonne Lewis and Gail Alexander (sitting) and student helpers (standing) at Tallwood High School in Virginia Beach.

In Memorium . . .

Virginia Loses Dedicated Public Servant

In the words of Edgardo Cortes, Commissioner for the Virginia Department of Elections: “The Virginia Department of Elections suffered a huge loss this week [March 27] . Martha Brissette, a long time Department employee, and her husband, Henry, died at the hands of a family member. This sudden and tragic end to Martha and Henry’s lives have left us all with many questions and few answers.

“Martha was a dedicated public servant who worked for the Department of Elections since 2007 as a policy analyst. Prior to joining the Department, Martha had a long and distinguished career holding positions at the Division of Legislative Services, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Virginia Supreme Court. Martha was a true election geek – she loved being able to work on policy issues that had a positive impact on voters. While most voters in Virginia wouldn’t recognize her, they all owe her thanks for her tireless work on their behalf.

“Martha was instrumental in ensuring Virginia went above and beyond to serve our military and overseas voters; constantly worked to make sure we incorporated accessibility for voters with disabilities in everything we provide to voters; and strived to make voting easy for the voters of the Commonwealth. Martha was loved and appreciated by everyone in the local registrar offices – no small feat for a state elections office employee”.

Leaguers who have been heavily engaged in the election process also paid tribute to Brissette. Therese Martin, former LWV board member for both Fairfax and Virginia, added: “League members who have had anything to do with Virginia’s election laws and their implementation during the last decade can certainly share the sentiments of Commissioner Cortés in the following “In Memoriam” for Martha Brissette from a recent edition of *Electionline*.

“We sat with Martha during General Assembly committee hearings, while monitoring meetings of the State Board of Elections, and at sessions of the General Registrar/Electoral Board workgroup. She provided wise counsel and helped locate that hard-to-find research information needed for

LWV election laws studies and programs.

“She also reached out to us for support of more accessible voting opportunities for our military and overseas voters. League members who attended the 2012 LWV-VA state council in Charlottesville had the opportunity to meet her as a member of a luncheon panel session. I have noted that it was action at this most recent session of the General Assembly that (apparently) Virginia’s remaining part-time voter registration offices will receive full-time status, a step that Martha urged us to support during her panel presentation. And, as all who knew her have mentioned, we knew Martha as a smart, warm and gentle person.

Former LWV state President Anne Sterling made a public statement upon hearing about Brissette’s death: “She brought legal acumen-- and more important, kindness and common sense-- to our Commonwealth. She contributed in so many ways to making our state government actually work. . . for real people. She was a pleasure to know, always helpful, and quick with enlightened suggestions, yet always willing to defer if it seemed wise.”



The Sorrenson Institute for Political Leadership of Charlottesville, VA recently held its annual Spring Gala and State Board members Carol Noggle, Sue Lewis and Anne Sterling represented the LWV-VA. Also pictured is Delegate Jennifer Boysko of the 86th District that includes parts of Fairfax and Loudoun Counties.