

Women's Legislative Roundtable
4th Floor East Conference Room
February 3, 2016

LWV-VA Co-president Lois Page welcomed attendees, including those from AAUW, OneVirginia2021, VA Now, VA Cure, and VA Center for Public Safety. Carol Noggle, LWV-VA 2nd Vice President and Legislative Coordinator, assisted with the session.

Sen. Adam Ebbin (D – 30th)

Sen. Ebbin is now on the P&E Committee. He discussed **SB711**, which establishes a commission for commemorating the Centennial of Women's Right to Vote with funding of \$50,000, with probable increases in the future. He is also patron of **SB303**, a bill requiring the State Electoral Board to convene for election complaints. Online training is to be made available to local election officials (SB772). At P&E is a bill requiring election rules to be applied everywhere equally. At P&E also is the charter school constitutional amendment (SJ6 sponsored by Sen. Obenshain and opposed by Sen. Ebbin), that would allow the Virginia Department of Elections to decide on charter schools. Now, localities decide. Localities would still fund the charters; private charter vendors could be selected. There would be no requirement that special education or ESL be offered. This amendment proposal could go on the November 2016 ballot if it passes. **SB89** (Marsden) has passed in the Senate and will now be heard in the House. It requires that the minutes of local electoral boards be posted online as soon as possible but no later than one week before the next Electoral Board meeting. The bill now will be heard in the House.

Del. Paul Krizek (D – 44th)

Del. Krizek also spoke to the charter school amendment. There is some intent to hold the vote on this to two years away, when fewer candidates would be on the ballot. Del. Krizek was asked about childhood education bills and funds for special needs children. He said Del. Mason's bill is a good one.

Del. Scott Taylor's (R – 85th) bill **HB90** requires that all personnel at National Guard facilities carry guns. There are lots of bills on this subject. Some National Guard officials are opposed to this bill because it overrides commander's decision. The bill may be amended.

Del. Vivian Watts (D – 39th)

Del. Watts' bill **HB547** would revise the K-12 school funding formula. Her bill won't pass, she said. Del. Watts passed out a handout outlining her wish to see actual ability-to-pay determinations made based on different taxing authorities granted to cities and counties. The current Composite Index was set in 1974; it is now inadequate. Cities have more robust taxing powers than counties; counties rely heavily on real estate taxes to fund schools because these taxes are in their control. Del. Watts would like to give counties the same taxing power as cities and adjust the school funding formula accordingly.

Andy Goddard, Legislative Director of the Virginia Center for Public Safety, reported that they may get gun safety bills through both the House and Senate. The administration has struck a deal with NRA and the GOP to do something about domestic violence in exchange for slightly enhanced use of background checks and reciprocity with other states regarding concealed handgun permits.

Sen. Mamie Locke (D – 2nd)

SB105 - supports funding for Virginia Housing Trust Fund in an effort to institutionalize funding for affordable housing. Sen. Locke also reported that **SB628** passed Courts. It states that communicating a threat to kill or do bodily injury to a person, regarding that person or any member of his family, and the threat places such person in reasonable apprehension of death or bodily injury to himself or his family member, is guilty of a Class 6 felony. This bill treats telephone, voice mail, verbal, email and written threats as the same. The bill would not affect children’s activities. The fiscal impact is now being analyzed.

Del. Jimmie Massie (R – 72nd)

Del. Massie is Chairman of K-12 Subcommittee for Educational Appropriations and chairs the Higher Education Subcommittee. Del. Massie expressed the importance of getting more people to the polls and urging them to be active in politics. He said that his areas of expertise are business, economics, and education. He reported big strides in addressing sexual assaults on campus with 3 bills passed last year. These bills put assaults on college transcripts, establishes coordination between campus police and the attorney’s office, and provides guidelines for dealing with assault reports. Women can come forward on a de-identified basis. (HB1015 and HB1013 and HB1016)

Del. Massie took questions from the group on the following issues:

Equal Rights Amendment – he supports equal pay for equal work but was noncommittal on the amendment.

Local Composite Index (LCI) Formula – should it be adjusted? Sen. Massie said that the Dillon rule may be interpreted to help counties’ revenue, and counties can always raise property taxes. But we don’t necessarily want a patchwork approach, he added.

Teacher Salaries – From the audience, complaint that they are too low, so that some teachers are on food stamps and receiving social services. He said there may be some growth in the Medicare budget.

General discussion, among those attending, presided over by Carol Noggle:

ERA – We need to encourage the House to bring ERA to the floor for debate; it has not been debated in 30 years.

There has been some movement on no-excuse absentee voting in the Senate.

The threshold for larceny is now \$200; we are still trying to increase the amount.

Environmental bills: **SB21** is a concern. It would require the Department of Environmental Quality to receive approval from the General Assembly before implementing EPA’s clean power plan.

HB1389 on Fracking: this bill would allow chemicals used in fracking to be kept as trade secrets. This is a transparency issue. One possibility is that the chemicals be disclosed but not their percentages.

SJ1 – Equal Rights Amendment – assigned to the House P&E, but not on the docket, but should be after “Crossover.”

The League supports HB1391 (Del. Kathleen Murphy D - 34th) to prevent persons subject to protective orders from possessing firearms.

Senators Barbara Favola (D - 31st) and Janet Howell (D - 32nd) are also carrying a bill (SB49) to prevent persons subject to protective orders from possessing firearms.

Del. John Bell (D - 87th) arrived and spoke.

He has introduced 18 bills, one on nonpartisan redistricting using the "shorted straight line" algorithm to address gerrymandering. He said he is also a champion for transparency. He has introduced a firearms bill (**HB617**) requiring that weapons training for permits for concealed carry of firearms be conducted in person, not just online or on video.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Recorded by Lynn Crowder (LWV-RMA) with input from Carol Noggle.
Thank you, Lynn.