From the President:

**JULY** – the month of the Glorious 4th, vacations and heat! And many local league planning retreats as they gear up for their upcoming year. Your Virginia State Board will be doing the same from the afternoon of the 15th through the afternoon of the 16th, at the Delta Hotel in downtown Richmond.

This month’s full Virginia Voter has lots of reports from the LWVUS Convention in Chicago attended by our 23 voting delegates representing 9 local leagues and the State Board, and at least one observer. There was a total of 867 voting delegates, from 49 states and DC, which was an excellent turnout. The plenary room held over 1000 women and men, including non-voting registered observers and wonderful Chicago volunteers and LWVUS staff. The Virginia delegation was very attentive during the entire three days of plenary sessions!

The new CEO of the LWVUS, Virginia Kase, who took office July 1, was introduced on Friday and we heard more from her on Sunday at the closing of the Convention. The speaker for the banquet on Saturday evening was a big hit, and her book sale attracted a very long line! For information about the other speakers and presenters, check out the LWVUS newly redone web site – lwvus.org/league-management.

Stay cool!
Sue Lewis

**2018 LWVUS Convention Highlights**

We have set up a special web page for those of you who could not attend Convention where you will find many of the highlights and some notes from our own Delegates of their experiences. [https://bit.ly/2IKdeLJ](https://bit.ly/2IKdeLJ). At the very top of this page is a link to Daily Briefings from LWV-US. Some of the highlights of the contents of that document can be found in the following notes on Council.

A motion was passed on Thursday to consider an amendment to the Proposed Program by supporting a popular vote for President and the abolition of the electoral college as a program focus beginning in the 2018-2020 biennium. This Motion 2018-119 was passed on Saturday. “I move to add “Advocacy for the National Popular Vote Compact” as an amendment to the 2018-2020 LWVUS Program, Making Democracy Work®/Improving Elections.

The ERA was front and center in Motion 2018-113 “I move that, when the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is duly ratified by the 38th state, the League of Women Voters of the United States takes the required steps to see the Amendment through whatever judicial or other challenges may occur until we see the ERA added to the U.S. Constitution in clear, bold, black and white.” This motion was passed on Saturday, June 30th.
Another motion that passed on Saturday was Motion 2018-79 “I move to retain all current LWVUS positions in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- July 15-16  LWV-VA Board Retreat
- July 16-20  National Disability Voter Registration Week
- July 20  LWVNCA Board Meeting
- Aug. 11  LWVNCA Leadership-Membership Workshop
- Aug. 26  Women's Equality Day

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The Eyes Have It

There is a great video that set the stage for Convention. You’ll see our own Action Coordinator, Deb Wake in it! (click image to see video)

On Thursday evening there was a special panel discussion featuring Ruth Greenwood and Nick Stephanopoulos. “A Conversation on Redistricting” was live streamed for all to see and it was awesome! If any of you missed seeing it, it is still available at http://bit.ly/2z3q4Fh

Another video that was live streamed was for the LWVUS United Nations Caucus. This event does a great job of showing what an important role the LWV has had with the United Nations since before its founding. That video can be seen at http://bit.ly/2KAMRNc

Some Notes From Our Delegates:

Gun Safety – Arm Yourself with Fact, Not Fiction: Gun Violence Prevention in America from LWV Florida

Wendy Fox-Grage, LWVFA

Giving teachers guns will NOT work. They are not trained to deal with active shooters, and it confuses police when they arrive on the scene of an active shooter. Student involvement is a huge opportunity. They want to ban assault weapons like the AR-15 and large magazines that hold lots of ammunition. We need to help young people register to vote. Students are free in the League US! Gun Violence Prevention is NOT about the 2nd Amendment. The NRA represents gun manufacturers. We must hold our lawmakers accountable. This is a grassroots movement.
What does National Popular Vote Mean? Every vote for the president counts. In every state that adopts the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NVPIC), with the exact wording, every electoral vote for that state will go to the presidential candidate who wins the country’s popular vote. Once enough states totaling 270 electoral votes adopt the NVPIC, the president will be elected by the popular vote making every vote count and the Electoral College obsolete. Currently, 10 states with a total of 172 electoral votes have enacted into law NVPIC.

Why should the League advocate for NVPIC?
- LWVUS has a position supporting “…the election of the President and Vice-President by direct-popular vote.”
- This will make every vote count. Votes will be equal across the country.
- It is a bipartisan issue.
- LWV has the necessary grassroots organization.
- The action could increase members.
- What actions would be required of LWVUS?
- Coordinate efforts between states.
- Education
- Facilitate collaboration among Leagues.
- Support states where NVPIC is likely to pass.

Strategies for having the convention adopt NVPIC as part of the 2018 – 2020 biennium Program as well as having states enact NVPIC were discussed.

Resources
National popularvote.com, retrieved December 11, 2017

What I expect from LWVUS Convention

Deb Wake, Action Coordinator LWV-VA

Mid-April, I was honored to have the opportunity to attend the LWVUS Convention as a delegate from my local league. I said yes knowing it fit my schedule, but not quite knowing what to expect. I’ve never been to the LWVUS Convention or to Chicago before.

Right away, I contacted two friends from Chicago to find out what there is to do in Chicago—and most importantly—where should I eat?? There was some overlap in their recommendations—which may help with a final decision. I shared the list with my fellow delegates—and got no response. They were all busy with other things and not in “convention mode.” I looked for convention information on the LWVUS website. They didn’t seem to be in convention mode either because there was not much information about the convention—only a link to register and a little about the hotel—that I think was posted by a state league.

At a LWVUS Lobby Corps meeting, there was mention of the Transformation Roadmap. What’s that? Lobby Corps leaders shared the document that I could then take back to my local league. The information is being used to reform the league and shape the convention, but it wasn’t widely shared until just a couple of months ago.

In the meanwhile, I attended my first local league annual meeting. We had a great speaker and I enjoyed getting to know my table-mates a little better. A few weeks later, I attended my first NCA Annual Convention. The format was similar to our local league annual meeting. Again, I enjoyed an excellent speaker and meeting new people at my table who shared many great ideas. A month after that, I attended my first LWVVA Council. I got to meet some of the folks from the Facebook groups face-to-face and network and exchange ideas.

To prepare for the LWVUS Convention, I signed up for every webinar offered: the budget, the plenaries and the Transformation Roadmap. But they were only marginally helpful. In the plenary webinar, forty minutes were devoted to how to make a motion but no mention of what the plenaries would be. I still have lots of questions.
Mid-June, information finally began to trickle out about a schedule/topics for the LWVUS Convention. I’ve uploaded it to a google doc so I can get to it again. But I’m so busy with other things—and so are the other delegates from my local league—that we haven’t had a chance to coordinate which caucus or workshops we’ll attend. In fact, I haven’t had a chance to decide for myself which I’ll attend—maybe on the plane.

I like to plan and organize. It’s my nature. I don’t feel very planned or organized going in, but I am excited and hope to learn a lot and meet lots of new people and learn what they’re doing.

After Convention

Deb Wake, Action Coordinator LWV-VA

More than 1000 LWV members descended on Chicago for the four-day biennial National Convention: Creating a More Perfect Democracy. The hotel seemed well-equipped to handle such a large crowd and the Illinois League worked to help everyone get to where they needed to be. It was an information-jammed four days with thought-provoking speakers, panels, caucuses and workshops—and a daily schedule that began at 7:30am and didn’t end until 9:30pm.

The overarching focus was the Transformational Roadmap. Some of the “map” is still being drawn but I think the destination is to make the demographics of the league match the demographics of the communities in which we live. It’s more than a numbers game, though. It’s to give everyone a voice and to be a richer organization where there is equity and inclusion. Speakers and activities made us aware of unconscious biases and suggested ways to increase our diversity. We were encouraged to be open (and letting ourselves be a little vulnerable) in order to form a relationship of trust with those that are not the same as us. It requires us to go to where they are and to listen and to partner.

We were reminded of the suffragettes and the sacrifices they made. They knew what exclusion felt like and fought to be inclusive. They worked to give a voice to those who had none. We are all advocates trying to evoke changes to make our communities and our world a better place for all to live in. It is important to be able to converse and persuade those with opinions that are different from our own. Non-partisanship is a powerful force that gives us leverage and influence and we must guard against picking a political side.

I wish we had had more free time. Informally, I met many wonderful people and learned a lot from conversations with them. All were willing to share information and experiences. I also wish I’d been able to spend an extra day just to experience more of Chicago.

I look forward to going through my notes and finding ways to share what I learned at the 2018 LWVUS Convention. I’m eager to apply lessons learned and reach out to those different to me and welcome them to the League. And I look forward to attending the 2020 LWVUS Convention in Washington, D.C. when we celebrate our 100th anniversary.

Recent Supreme Court Rulings on Redistricting and How It Relates to Virginia A Review

by Lisa Koteen Gerchick, LWV

In the past two weeks, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered decisions in Gill v. Whitford, Benisek v. Lamone, and Rucho v. Common Cause (combined with Rucho v. League of Women Voters of North Carolina), choosing to duck, rather than resolve, the issue of partisan gerrymandering. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg commented on the day the Court announced the Gill and Benisek decisions, “To be continued.”

But what does that mean for Virginia? Currently, Article II. Section 6. of the Virginia constitution requires only that districts be compact and contiguous. The state legislature draws its own district boundaries. You read that correctly—the legislators design their own districts. As a consequence of such partisan line-drawing, Virginia is one of the most gerrymandered states in the country. To get fair redistricting, Virginians must amend the Commonwealth’s constitution to institute an independent redistricting commission. For LWVVA, it is an opportunity to educate and to advocate for the passage of such an amendment.

The League’s partner organization,
OneVirginia2021, is promoting the effort to amend the constitution to install an independent redistricting commission, comprised of the President Pro Tempore (majority leader) of the State Senate, the Senate leader of the opposing party, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the minority leader of the House of Delegates, the Auditor of Public Accounts, the Commonwealth’s Inspector General, and the Executive Director of the Virginia State Bar. These last three are nonpartisan. Greg Lucyk, president of OneVirginia2021, explains: “Absent federal court action, a constitutional amendment is our last chance for real reform to end partisan gerrymandering before the 2021 round of redistricting.”

How does that work? Unlike many states’ constitutions, which can be amended by a citizens’ ballot initiative, Virginia’s constitution can be amended only after a lengthy and complex legislative process to put the referendum on the ballot. The legislation must pass both houses of the Virginia General Assembly in two “readings,” separated by an election, before the referendum can be placed on the ballot. The “first read” will be during the General Assembly session in January – March 2019. In November 2019, the entire General Assembly will be up for election. Then, the second read takes place in the January – March 2020 session. If the constitutional amendment measure passes both times, it will be placed on the ballot in November 2020. Clearly, passage and adoption of the amendment demands concerted time and effort.

The “gold standard” of bills before the General Assembly is SJ25 (Hanger). Read it here: http://bit.ly/2MFZJiw. League members and other voters should contact their representatives in both the Senate and House of Delegates to ask them to support this legislation. Referring to the Supreme Court’s refusal to address partisan gerrymandering head on, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger implored, “This is not the end of the war for fair districts. It is a call to action. This is our problem to solve. And we can solve it.” To end the partisan gerrymandered districts, it is important to heed the call.

New LWVUS Website

We invite members to join us in our LWV-VA Communications Team private Facebook Group so that we can work together to help us better utilize what is on the website. http://bit.ly/2IOUQYY

In some cases, you can consider it a bit of an Easter Egg Hunt as we ask questions and try to find the answers. The following article will help to identify some of the major pages that you will want to bookmark!

NEWSROOM page: view the statements and press releases of LWVUS here.

BLOG: Do you routinely check out the LWVUS Blog? You should. Very interesting reading there and a good way to come up with topics of discussion.

CONTACTUS page: You can direct your questions to the national organization here. Subject options include: General, Advocacy/Lobbying, Development/Fundraising, Roster Manager Support, Voter Information and Website Issue Support

TAKE ACTION page: Here is where you can find information on important national issues and ways to take action. These can be shared with your members to help increase League impact. Currently you will find:

1. U.S. House to Vote on Bad Immigration Bills – Contact Your Representative Today.
2. Citizenship Question is Bad for the Census
3. Tell Congress to Pass Sensible Gun Laws
4. Congress Must Pass the Dream Act NOW
5. Urge Congress to Support the Automatic Voter Legistration Act

MISSION IMPACT TOOLS: This page connects you with tools that have been developed to empower members. It includes:

1. Federal Action Request Form for you to submit request at Federal level
2. High School Voter Registration Training Manual
3. Redistricting Action Kit

VOTING RIGHTS: Provides information on our priorities such as:
1. Expanding Voter Access,
2. Redistricting, Money in Politics, and
3. Fighting Voter Suppression.

**ELECTIONS:** Our priorities concerning elections can be found here:

1. Educating Voters
2. VOTE411
3. Increasing Voter Registration

**BLOG:** Do you routinely check out the LWVUS Blog? You should. Very interesting reading there and a good way to come up with topics of discussion.

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**Report from LWV-VA Council Held on June 16, 2018**

Do not let the serenity fool you, there was a LOT of work done!

Sherry Zachry, LWVNCA Delegate

(photos: Lynn Johnston LWV-VA Board)

The LWV of Virginia Council met at the Roslyn Retreat and Conference Center, 8727 River Road in Richmond. The morning Plenary began at 10:00AM with welcome messages from LWV-VA President Sue Lewis and Mary Crutchfield, President of the LWV of the Richmond Metro Area (LWVRMA). Roll Call, adoption of Council Rules, and appointments were made. Credentials report showed 38 delegates from all local Leagues and ILO (Inter-League Organization) were present with approximate total of 60 people attending.

The proposed LWV-VA Budget (OF) for 2018-2019 was presented, along with the Ed Fund Budget (delegates do not vote on the Ed Fund Budget, included for information only).

Updates to two LWV-VA positions were presented and formally moved as motions from the LWV-VA Board, not as Concurrences:

1. Behavioral Health Committee’s proposal for a totally revised Mental Health position, and renamed Behavioral Health. Committee Chair Linda Rice led the presentation. Although the new position was presented as a motion approved by the LWV-VA board, it was understood that there would not be any changes to the approved wording of the new position.

2. The Schools Task Force, renamed “Public Funds for Public Schools”, presented a new section to the LWV-VA Education position, Part III: School Choice Options: Standards and Criteria. Task Force Chair Carol Noggle made the presentation and answered questions. Again, it was understood that there would be no changes to the wording of Part III.

The budget and program presentations were followed by a delightful talk by Dr. Rachel Bitecofer, Assistant Director of the Wason Center for Public Policy at Christopher Newport University, SA, on political behavior, campaigns, elections, and political analysis of recent and upcoming elections in Virginia and in the nation. In her position with the Wason Center, she conducts survey research on public policy issues and election campaigns. Her research has been featured in many media outlets including national outlets such as the Washington Post, Huffington Post, and NPR and she is a regular contributor on CBC Radio. Her book, The Unprecedented 2016 Presidential Election, was published in 2017 and she is working on a follow-up. Link: [http://bit.ly/2NkodyL](http://bit.ly/2NkodyL)

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After lunch which featured “topic tables” on various subjects at Council, the Plenary resumed at 1:45 PM. There was a presentation by Pat Fishback from the LWV-VA Women’s Rights Committee on ERA and the effort to have Virginia become the 38th state to ratify ERA (after recent ratifications by Nevada and Illinois).

The Women’s Rights and the VA Code Task Force was given approval to continue its restudy of the LWV-VA position called “Women’s Rights and the VA Code” with Council approval of the motion made by LWV-VA Program Director Anne Bradstreet Smith: On the recommendation of the Board, I move that the Task Force on Women’s Rights be authorized to proceed with recommendations to update the current position and to include sexual harassment and to bring such recommendations for action at the 2019 Convention.

Council adopted the Proposed LWV-VA Budget for 2018-19 with one amendment: to strike $3,600 from Expense Line 69, Virginia Voter, which was intended to print and mail over 100 copies of the Voter four times a year to members who do not have email capabilities. The reasoning was that the local Leagues would be responsible for disseminating the Virginia Voter to those members who do not have email.

Council adopted the Behavioral Health and Education position updates as presented.

Break Out Discussions on LWVUS Convention Prep/Transformational Journey and Working With Activist Groups followed close of Plenary. Council adjourned after 4:00 PM with presentation of the Advocacy Award and Direction to the Board.
Governor, Attorney General (every 4 years), the Senate (every 4 years), House of Delegates (every 2 years), County governments (every 4 years), and Municipal offices (various intervals). It also sets the days of election, with general elections occurring “the Tuesday succeeding the first Monday in November” except for County, City, and Town governing bodies, which are elected on the Second Tuesday in June. The first Constitution following Reconstruction was adopted in 1869 - an odd year - with these even-year cycles. Subsequent constitutions have been adopted - the most recent in 1971, also an odd year - with this cycle intact.

Accordingly, the Code of Virginia cites the years 1995, 1997, and 1999 throughout Chapter 2 of Title 24.2 as points from which the cycle will continue. These dates were designated following recodification of the title in 1993.

Although no direct evidence exists for a motivation for keeping Virginia’s election cycle as it is (aside from tradition), there may be a benefit of doing so. This cycle would, theoretically, insulate state elections from the background of federal election cycles - with their associated ads, campaigns, and issues. This should allow state candidates to campaign on state issues alone, free from the noise of national news. The same idea was behind a trend started in the mid-1890s that shifted local elections away from both state and federal elections to insulate them, since most local offices are non-partisan. But some evidence exists that the Gubernatorial election - held one year after the presidential one - is seen as a kind of mid-term election. It is, after all, one of the first elections of a high-profile partisan chief executive after the President is sworn in. State elections have their own ads, campaigns, and issues. There is another set of ads, campaigns, and issues for the County and Municipal elections, so voters get subjected to electoral politics almost constantly. A better argument could be made that the constant hum of headlines, made more prevalent by the news cycle and the internet, is on an average voter’s mind all year long. If the intent was to insulate the state issues from national issues, today’s information-saturated world has rendered that effect obsolete.

What about turnout with the current cycle? The League supports higher turnout, and many of our efforts are aimed at raising it. Would placing state and local elections on the same ballot as the Federal ones boost turnout? Statewide turnout statistics from 1976 to 2017 show the highest turnout in presidential election years (varying between 67 and 83.7 percent), but Gubernatorial election turnout is markedly lower (between 40.4 and 66 percent). Assembly-only election year turnout is even lower on average (between 28.6 and 51.6 percent). These turnout numbers certainly indicate that combining elections could raise turnout, but since Virginia has always done elections this way, there is no direct comparison with combined elections available. As for other states who have combined elections, the data is limited, since only one state (California) has studied the effect of combination on overall turnout and turnout for local elections in depth. There is evidence that voters like to vote less often, despite concerns that they will be less informed by doing so, and the California study showed that participation in ‘down-ballot races’ (school boards, municipal) is boosted by combining. A lot of factors influence turnout, however, so it’s hard to attribute it just to date selection.

If an effort were made to change the dates, how should it be done? I don’t claim to have the exact answer, but it’s clear that should a shift be warranted, it should not be done lightly, since there are numerous stakeholders and many questions to answer. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) cites some other considerations to account for when considering a shift:

- Is a Constitutional Amendment required? In our case, it appears that only an amendment to Title 24.2 would be needed. The problem then is how to manage the terms of those already elected. Do we shorten or lengthen their terms? The answer would need to be included in the bill passed to effect the shift. The Administrative Code would also need to be changed to ensure nothing gets overlooked.

- Elections cost money to run. Would combining them be cheaper? If we shifted, how would we pay for the cost of executing that shift, and what does the cost look like long-term? Could an offer to pay at the state level remove local resistance to the move?

- Can the existing electoral structure handle the anticipated boost in turnout on election days?
there enough voting machines, poll workers, and ballots? Are the polling hours sufficient, or would expansions of absentee and early voting be required to handle the expected rise in traffic? If more voting machines are needed, how do they get paid for and when? Would that be done piecemeal, or all at once if an upgrade is desired?

• How do you educate the public on the new process? There are various methods, and some minimum lead time would be required to select the method(s), form them, and promulgate them. This is especially key for when new ballot styles, types, and machines are going to be used.

• Which elections get combined? Which combination can be accomplished with the best cost, least political resistance, and best boost in turnout? If we want to move Municipal elections to November, an amendment will be required. Many states use the odd years for local elections and even years for state and federal elections. 5 states have elections only once every 2 years and only in November by combining everything. Virginia’s solution need not simply copy one of these models, but the voters should get a say on which combination works best for them. They are, after all, the chief stakeholders.

Taken altogether, a case can be made for combining elections to boost turnout in Virginia. The reasons for the current cycle are predominantly historical, with limited evidence of any benefits and a negative effect on turnout when fewer races are on the ballot. True, the evidence that turnout would be boosted by combining elections is limited. Funding, education, and training would be required to make it happen. But the available evidence trends towards a positive effect on election turnout (especially in down-ballot races), not to mention relief from a constant campaign cycle. The short-term difficulties involved with a shift would be outweighed by the long-term rise in turnout, with the associated benefits of a more representative and responsive government. Boosting voter participation is a key to Making Democracy Work, and combining elections could go a long way towards that.


3. Ibid., Article V, Sections 1 (Governor), 13 (Lt. Governor), and 15 (Attorney General); Article IV, Sections 2 (Senate) and 3 (House of Delegates); Article VII, Sections 4 (County and City Officers) and 5 (County, City, and Town Governing Bodies).

4. Ibid. The same sections laying out each office’s periodicity also designates which of the 2 days their elections are to be held. The exceptions are Primary and Special Elections, which are mentioned, but dates for them are neither prescribed nor regulated.

5. Austermuhle. In the segment, he interviews Brent Tarter, a retired historian and author, who discusses the odd-year cycle as “a pure accident” in his discussion of its history.


7. Austermuhle. Tarter makes the point in his interview: “There are a lot of people who think that divorcing elections of governors from elections of presidents may work to the advantage of Virginia politics, in that it keeps controversial presidential candidates or controversial national issues from influencing elections that ought to be on state candidates and state issues.”


presidential-gubernatorial cycle and today serves, depending upon who you talk to, as an early gauge on public approval of the president or a steady reminder of the importance Virginia places on tradition.”


11. Hueso and Holmes, p2.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid

**Important News for Members and Leaders**

**For All Board Members**

Considering that July 1 marks the beginning of the new League year and that both the local and state Leagues are growing, it is helpful that LWV-VA publishes a guide for not-so-new as well as brand new League board members. We urge you to share this document with all local League board members, new and long-serving: New and Not So New Board Members

It is a pdf that can be downloaded, printed, and shared easily.

**Membership**

**For GOTV**

We have some nice graphics provided by LWVNCA that are available for use by all Virginia Leagues: ARE YOU GOTV READY? Check out these resources to help you expand your plans. http://bit.ly/2rWTJUB Be sue to check out the Members Corner page as it has a new design and some new information.

**Webmaster**

**Keep Membership List Up To Date**

We use the national data base as a means of verifying that people are actual members before allowing them to join any of the Facebook Groups that we have set for members only. That list is also used to update our email distribution list. We obtain a copy from the state membership director monthly but we also update our lists based upon what you send in to membership and to me. Thanks for your help in making sure that we keep all members informed and engaged!

Communications

**LWV-VA Facebook Groups**

Carolyn Caywood, LWV-VA Facebook Coordinator

Until this past year the main objection to Facebook was the way it stole time. Then we learned about data harvesting and targeted political manipulation. So why does the League want to do even more with Facebook?

Facebook Groups are a reasonably good way to connect with other League members who share an interest. They are not the only way. Yahoo also supports groups. And some of you will remember the LWVUS Forums. When the Forums didn’t work out for most League members, several Google Groups and some Facebook Groups sprang up. Members clearly want to connect with others in other local Leagues.

But most of us don’t want to have to learn how to use another site and remember another password, no matter how many bells and whistles it offers. That suggests we should pick the site most people already use which appears to be Facebook. And even if you don’t much like Facebook, the groups are more useful and less distracting.

You can see the LWV-VA Facebook Groups at http://bit.ly/2MHt500 Some have just recently been added. If there is a topic that rightfully falls within the League mission or positions that you want to have added, let the LWV-VA board know. http://lwv-va.org/contact-us/

If you are new to Facebook Groups, start with LWV-VA Social. It’s a bit of a catch-all where everything that doesn’t fit a specific group will show up. It’s also where we talk about the League itself, and about social media. You can post something you saw in the news, or ask a question, or share the cool thing your local League just did. You will get to know people in
other Virginia Leagues. The conversation will be civil and the information verified. But there probably won’t be any videos of kittens doing silly things.

Welcome Deb Wake – Action Coordinator

Deb Wake provides us with some information about herself and her goals for the coming year.

Deb Wake, Action Coordinator, LWV-VA

Except for a brief stint in Silver Spring MD and a summer in Los Angeles, CA, I’ve lived in Virginia. I was born and raised in the Shenandoah Valley near Harrisonburg. I went to college at Virginia Tech, married and started a family in the Blacksburg area. We moved to the Short Pump area of Richmond when the kids were 4 years, 2 years and 2 months old. Most of my time in Richmond was spent volunteering in the schools and with the PTA, volunteering at church and volunteering at the local food bank. I also organized and played a ridiculous amount of tennis and did genealogical research. On the day our youngest graduated high school, we moved to Vienna, VA.

For many years, although not an LWV member, I used Vote411 as a resource. Having moved to a new part of the state and knowing nothing about local politics or who my representatives were, I looked for a LWV meeting our first summer in northern Virginia, but either the units were not meeting at all or were meeting in private homes, so I put off attending a meeting. I researched the candidates but still did not join the League. Then there was an election.

For those of you who do not know, the Shenandoah Valley is very conservative. It’s been 20 years since I lived in Blacksburg, but there was a time when my Democratic veterinarian and my Republican butcher ran for the same delegate seat—and I had good interactions with and liked them both. Richmond was also very conservative when we moved there but was purple when we left to live in the deepest blue part of the state. During the 2016 presidential campaign, I was distressed by the polarization and divisiveness. I was called names on Facebook—only by one person whom I guess is incapable of civil discourse—but it still troubles me. I joined the LWV because it is a non-partisan organization and we have to be able to talk to each other.

I cannot say enough good things about LWV. I’ve been welcomed, nurtured, encouraged and valued. I’m constantly learning.

Last year, I worked very hard with a team of others to try to gain dedicated funding for Metro. Metro is vital to Northern Virginia but is also an economic driver for the entire state. In trying to get help on the issue we were having in northern Virginia, I reached out to leagues in other parts of the state. Hampton Roads has a bus problem. Western Virginia has an I-81 problem. Although we’re all vying for the same state funds, our local leagues should be working together to solve these problems since what helps/hurts one of us, affects all of us.

The Behavior Health study is a good example of local leagues coming together for a common good. The committee was composed of members from the Williamsburg area, the new Fredericksburg league and the Fairfax area. We can accomplish so much more when we work together—whether it’s the leagues within our state (or our country) or whether it’s our legislature. Look what happened with Medicaid Expansion this year!

We’re still working out the details, but as the new Action Coordinator, I want to work to connect local league members around issues that are important to them and encourage partnerships with local leagues across the state and with outside organizations. We can increase our memberships, our support and our
influence—and results—by working together. Many members join LWV in order to do something and make a difference. We can do so much more by working together.

From Council and Beyond ...

Anne Bradstreet Smith
Program Director

Congratulations to all three Task Forces for your incredibly good work during the past year! Chairs Linda Rice (Williamsburg) presented Behavioral Health and Carol Noggle (Prince William) presented the final results of a year of hard, detailed work. Delegates accepted both reports and adopted revisions that update the current positions. You will find the language on the website by clicking http://bit.ly/2z2sXGb. These Task Forces have completed their research work and now it’s for all of us to engage in strong advocacy and action.

Alison Beall (Richmond), Chair, presented the preliminary report of the Task Force on Women’s Rights. The Task Force reviewed the Code of Virginia and determined that the specific points of the current position have been addressed by legislative action. This satisfies the specific charge of the study. During their work, however, sexual harassment emerged as a major unaddressed issue. The Task Force requested authorization to extend the study and to proceed with recommendations to update the current position and to include sexual harassment. The Task Force will bring recommendations for action at the LWV-VA 2019 Convention. If you are interested in working on Task Force for this phase of the Women’s Rights study, please let me know.

On a related note, Pat Fishback (Richmond) gave an update on the status of the ERA. Pat has been one of the leaders in this effort and you can view her presentation at the 2018 Virginia House of Delegate on our website under Action and Advocacy/Women’s Rights. You will also find the adopted “ERA Talking Points” in that section of the site.

Again thanks so much to the leadership and members of all three Task Forces for their exceptional work to update these important League positions!