

# LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: Behavioral Health

## LWVVA Position in Brief:

Support for comprehensive behavioral health care that includes both mental illness and substance use disorder.

- Access for all people to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive services.
- Coordination of comprehensive and integrated care among Health and Human Services (specifically Behavioral Health) and other state departments such as Medical Assistance Services (Medicaid), Public Safety (re-entry planning, identification of behavioral health needs in jails/prisons, patient's rights, substance abuse, and drug/mental health courts), Housing (Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing), and Education (health education from early childhood through adult). These agencies must provide this care along with a focus on community-based services such as Community Service Boards (CSBs).
- Realignment of the funding equation so that a higher proportion of funds to CSBs rather than state institutions. This will result in more cost-effective care that is more responsive to client's needs.
- Adequate funds and other incentives to ensure sufficient trained staff at all levels of service.
- Continued efforts to decrease the stigmatization of behavioral health problems and care.

(2018)

# LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: Behavioral Health

## Talking Points:

- Urge state legislators, local governments, and the school boards to provide adequate financial resources for:
  - o Projects at Community Service Boards (CSBs)
  - o Recruitment of capable staff for the CSBs, state institutions, and public schools
  - o Infrastructure improvements at state institutions
  - o Development of Permanent Supportive Housing
- Support early identification and intervention in behavioral health problems in schools by recruiting more school counselors
- Promote greater access to behavioral health treatment during imprisonment...and minimize solitary confinement
- Support the establishment of local Drug and/or Mental Illness Specialty Courts/Dockets for diversions from the criminal justice system

# LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: ERA Ratification

## LWVUS Position:

The League of Women Voters believes that the federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons in the United States regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability. Employment opportunities in modern, technological societies are closely related to education; therefore, the League supports federal programs to increase the education and training of disadvantaged people. The League supports federal efforts to prevent and/or remove discrimination in education, employment and housing and to help communities bring about racial integration of their school systems.

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all regardless of sex. The League supports action to bring laws into compliance with the ERA:

- To eliminate or amend those laws that have the effect of discriminating on the basis of sex
- To promote laws that support the goals of the ERA
- To strengthen the enforcement of such existing laws.

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved. (Statement of Position on Equality of Opportunity, as Revised by the National Board in January 1989, based on Positions Announced by the National Board in January 1969, adopted by the 1972 Convention, Expanded by the 1980 Convention and the 2010 Convention.)

## LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: ERA Ratification

### Talking Points:

When the Constitution was written and began with the phrase "We the people of the United States...", it meant "We the men (white property-holders) of the United States ..." and was never intended to grant equal protections under the law to women. This has never changed.

The late Supreme Court Justice, Anton Scalia, said publicly "The Constitution does not prevent discrimination against women."

The United States of America cannot assume leadership in human rights among the countries of the world until its Constitution is amended to fully protect the rights of American women.

# LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: Gun Violence Prevention

## LWVUS Position:

The League of Women Voters believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.

The League supports a ban on "Saturday night specials," enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.(1990, 1994, 1998)

# LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: Gun Violence Prevention

## Talking Points:

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, firearm related homicides has increased 31% from 2014-2016.<sup>1</sup>
- Public support for tighter gun laws has grown significantly since the Parkland High School shooting resulting in several states passing legislation to disarm dangerous people (e.g., domestic violence abusers and people exhibiting violent behavior).
  - Domestic Violence: While Virginia law requires the surrender of guns when a permanent protective order is issued it stops short during the most dangerous time – the 72 hours after the partner leaves an abuser. New legislation which would require alleged domestic abusers to surrender their guns (or preferably allow law enforcement to seize the gun similar to Maryland state law) after being served with a temporary restraining order would reduce deaths.
  - “Red Flag” Laws: Legislation which would allow families or law enforcement to remove a person’s access to firearms before they commit violence (known as “red flag” laws or “extreme risk protection orders”). Eight states have passed such legislation since the Parkland High School shooting in February 2018.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6729a4.htm?s\\_cid=mm6729a4\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6729a4.htm?s_cid=mm6729a4_w)

# LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: Elections

## LWVVA Position in Brief:

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that democratic government depends on the informed and active participation of its citizens; that voting is a right and responsibility; and that election laws, regulations and administrative procedures should be uniformly designed and applied, and adequately funded to facilitate and increase voter participation throughout Virginia.

Specifically, the League supports measures to ensure the availability of voter registration and to encourage and facilitate increased voter participation in elections, including: absentee voting by mail and in- person without a reason; an adequate number of voting machines and trained election officers; the use of satellite voting; split shifts for election officers when needed; and measures that take advantage of technological advances such as online voter registration and the use of electronic poll books. The League also supports the shared funding of statewide registration and voting systems by the localities and the Commonwealth; providing adequate authority and resources to the Department of Elections (ELECT) and the State Board of Elections (SBE) for oversight and enforcement of laws and standards for registration and elections uniformly throughout the Commonwealth; and the use of secure electronic means to facilitate voter registration and absentee voting for Virginia's military and overseas voters. (2011, 2015)

## Talking Points:

- Split Precincts:
  - Localities must change precincts in redistricting years such as 2021 to match the districts established by the General Assembly – to avoid issues raised in Northam's veto.
  - Registration must be passed to accomplish this during the 2020 session.
- Recount Law and Procedures:
  - Virginia should become a mandated automatic recount state if the election results are within 1 percent for a candidate and 1000 votes for a referendum question.
  - Costs for the recount should be borne by the Commonwealth, not the candidates or localities.
- Post-election risk limiting audits:
  - Virginia needs to legislate "real" risk-limiting audits. Because there are four different types of election machines used in Virginia and since jurisdictions vary in size and

management, the Commonwealth should first conduct a series of pilot audits to determine which methodologies will yield best practices for each situation.

- The City of Fairfax recently conducted a pilot risk-limiting audit under the supervision of the Commissioner of Elections and the local registrar, with expert observers present. The audit, of the Republican primary, was small (1,000 ballots cast in total) but deemed a success.
- The League should encourage: (1) appropriate legislation to begin real risk-limiting audits sooner rather than later; and (2) pilot RLAs in jurisdictions across the Commonwealth to develop best practices.
- **Absentee Ballots**
- Virginia needs to enact “no excuse” early voting
- Provide funding for all counties. /cities in Commonwealth to have early voting polling locations established and early voting to start in late September. Having people vote on “real machines,” albeit early, gives them a sense of security that their vote will count.
- **Paper Trail and Secure Equipment:**
  - Virginia needs to purchase new machines that will print paper receipts (similar to ATM) so that the voters is assured that their votes have been recorded correctly.
  - The Commonwealth needs to devise a plan to have an independent board of computer experts test voting equipment yearly before voting begins to assure that it is still “hack-proof.” Money should be set aside to upgrade or change voting equipment when it is no longer safe.
  - Virginia needs to require and that post-election audits are mandatory and must be completed before any election is certified. It should provide the resources and training to accomplish this.
  - Virginia should require best practices for reconciling the number of ballots with the number of voters at the precinct and county levels
  - The state pass legislation mandating a review process that ensures that all voting memory cards have been properly loaded onto the tally server at the county level
  - Virginia should require that election results and ballot reconciliation information be made public.
  - Virginia should require that pre-election logic and accuracy testing of all voting machines must be conducted prior to an election and that the testing be open to the public.

- Voter Purging:
- Legislation is needed to make the list of inactive voters more accessible to third party groups such as the LWV so that we can contact these people prior to voter registration deadlines.
- Oversight steps need to be implemented to assure that all local registrars are following the stated procedures to inform inactive voters of their situation.

# LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: Redistricting

## LWVVA Position in Brief:

Support for the establishment, in law, of a politically balanced and independent Reapportionment Commission for each decennial redistricting to prepare, with the Virginia Department of Legislative Services, a plan for submission to the legislature as specified by the Virginia Constitution. The Commission should be bi-partisan and be composed of individuals who are not elected officials; they should represent the geographical distribution and demographic diversity of the state, and consist of an uneven number of members.

In addition to the Virginia constitutional requirement of equal population, contiguous and compact districts and the need for protecting the voting strength of minority groups, the League supports the following considerations in redistricting:

- Natural geographic boundaries;
- Jurisdictional boundaries;
- Communities of interest; and
- Competitiveness

The Virginia constitution should be amended to provide that redistricting will occur on a decennial basis only. (1985, 2007)

# LWVVA Legislative Priorities, 2019 Session: Redistricting

## Talking Points:

- Constitutional Amendment:
- Establishing Commission that is:
  - politically balanced and independent
  - not composed of elected officials
  - representative of the geographical distribution of the state
  - representative of the demographic diversity of the state
  - of uneven number of members
- Decennial redistricting plan prepared by the above commission and the Virginia Department of Legislative services should create districts that are:
  - of equal population
  - are contiguous and compact
  - protect the voting strength of minority groups
  - consider natural geographic boundaries
  - consider jurisdictional boundaries
  - consider communities of interest
  - are competitive