



League of Women Voters®
of Virginia



Voter Express

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EMPOWERING VOTERS

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

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Is the League's Nonpartisan Stance Outdated?

By Joan Porte, President, LWV-Arlington

(Ms. Porte surveys the high intensity civic scene and raises some questions to force us to think about the fundamental League principle of nonpartisanship and whether it survives in the contemporary partisan climate.)

All League members know that we have always been a nonpartisan organization. The League does not support or oppose any candidate; and the League does not support or oppose any political party. According to the new Transformation Roadmap, the League will always be a nonpartisan organization. In the past two years, however, we have seen the explosion of very active, very loud, very partisan groups attracting women and young people to their causes which are often anything but nonpartisan. Our hundred-year-old League is striving to attract younger, more diverse people; and these active and energetic people appear tailored-made for the League.

Has our non-partisan stance outlived its time? Can we at least bend our policy to “compete” so that the newbies will join the League? Is it fine for LWV members to appear at events sponsored by partisan groups just to introduce ourselves to these new activists? How do we carry our nonpartisanship to their partisan events?

Do we feel intimidated by them? Can we build a relationship with them based on issues while we accentuate our nonpartisanship stance, or at least not hide such an admirable quality? Is our refusal to take partisan sides something we can proudly display? In the cacophony of the day is it more important than ever for us to proudly display our nonpartisanship?

Our cache is our century of emphasis on studying and of educating the public on issues not people. We “defend Democracy” by paving an easier path to the

voting booth for an educated public. Instead of trying to blend with the new kids on the block, shouldn't we keep ourselves separate and true to ourselves?

Can the League stay relevant and true to itself in this divided political world? My answer is yes – and I will have more suggestions on how we should work to achieve this in the next edition of the Virginia Voter.

Success for Fall Workshops



State League President Sue Lewis called an early meeting of Local League Presidents



Anne Sterling led the #1 ACTION Priority: REDISTRICTING REFORM

86 people registered for Workshops this year and the rating for the Event was 4.7 out of 5!

SPECIAL SAVE THE DATE! DECEMBER 5TH LEGISLATIVE PRE-SESSION

Rethinking Election Security

by Jacob Hurt, LWV-Fairfax Area

(Mr. Hurt takes a fresh look at the topic of “Election Security” and how each of us can play a part in the year-round effort to Make Democracy Work[®] by protecting not only the voters, but also their votes, from the time they register to the time they cast their votes.)

We have done a lot of work to make sure that voters are registered, have their IDs, and get to the right polling place on Election Day. We now have headlines about Russian election influence and hacking attempts¹ as well as recent domestic voter suppression efforts² that make us worry about the integrity of the systems that the voter faces at the precinct on Election Day? If we don't take care of both voters and systems, voters can't cast true votes; and democracy loses.

For a long time, we could believe that the votes were secure, on protected systems, overseen by people who want everyone to vote, and free from foreign access. It turns out they are not, and it's up to us to close that gap. Here are some things each of us can do to get started, no matter what time of year or how long we have been in the League:

- Join the Corps of Observers and attend Board of Elections meetings. Talk to the veteran observers about past issues and their resolution. Bring along the Brennan Center for Justice's "Election Security Advance Planning Guide" and see if there are any needs³. Maybe even meet with the Registrar and discuss that guide with them. Learn the Election Code and regulations along the way.
- Become a Poll Worker or Election Observer and see "where the rubber meets the road", or more appropriately, "where the person and vote meet." This is a wonderful way to learn about the process and issues that voters face.
- Meet with your elected officials (as individuals) and discuss how they can advocate for legislation--and funding!--to help the voter and the vote. Get them on the record in support of measures and ask them to introduce or co-sponsor related legislation. (To see the recent report on the State Board of Elections, use the link provided below.⁴ That report is definitely something to talk about.)

- If you see something, say something! Misinformation, attempts to close polling places or otherwise limit access without sufficient justification, are just some of actions that undermine confidence in elections because they preclude voters from casting their votes. Bring attention to them--whether you call the Electoral Board, the Registrar, or the local media--and then push to make it right!
- And, of course, register yourself, join a registration event, and make sure registrations are up-to-date before the deadline to protect yourself and others against potential problems.

These are just a few ways that each and every one of us can work together to protect the voters, their votes, and public confidence. It's not just *election season* anymore. Making Democracy Work[®] through election security is a year-round, *all-hands-on deck* effort!

1. "ICA 2017-01D: Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections". *Director of National Intelligence*, 6 January 2017. <http://bit.ly/2QivTT7> Accessed 21 September 2018.
2. Williams, Vanessa. "Ill-fated plan to close polling places in Georgia county recalled lingering prejudice." *The Washington Post*, 24 August 2018. <https://wapo.st/2R78dlQ>. Accessed 21 September 2018.
3. "Election 2018: What You Need to Know". The Brennan Center for Justice. <http://bit.ly/2NRqtBT>. Accessed 21 September 2018. Note there is a checklist for election officials and one for individual advocacy that can be shared.
4. "Operations and Performance of Virginia's Department of Elections." Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, Virginia General Assembly, 10 September 2018. <http://bit.ly/2IpiW70>. Accessed 21 September 2018.

IMPORTANT DATES

October:

15th – Last Day to Register/Update Address for General Election

27th – In-Person Absentee Voting (Saturday)

30th – Last Day to Request Absentee Ballot by Mail

November:

3rd – Last Day to Request Absentee Ballot in Person; In-Person Absentee Voting (Saturday)

6th – General Election Day

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