

EMPOWERING VOTERS



2019 LWV-VA Biennial Convention



Reminder: Registration for the LWV-VA 2019 Biennial Convention and the discount rate for rooms at the Waterside Marriott in Norfolk from May 16-May 19 end on **Thursday, April 25**.

Please use the links below to find out more about Convention activities, Register, and make your Payment.

Please call the Waterside Marriott at 757-627-4100 & mention League of Women Voters to make your discounted room reservations (\$139/night plus taxes, etc.).

This is the 39th Biennial Convention of the LWV of Virginia. Official delegates have voting privileges. Non-delegate members are observers and are welcome to all activities.

On the Convention webpage (<https://lww-va.org/39th-biennial-convention/>) you will find information about Lodging specials, Convention registration, and a basic schedule for Convention.

Because there were special options with this Convention, you will find that the payments with PayPal are using a shopping cart. There are two sections and you need to choose your options. Everyone attending any of the Convention or Additional Features will need to submit an

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individual registration form:

<https://goo.gl/forms/mutK1u2YeBO9r4rI2>. One person may pay for several people by selecting multiple items.

Each time you click the Add to Cart button you will be directed to the shopping cart where you will see what you have ordered. To add more, use the "Continue shopping" link on the top right of that page to return to add more selections. All of this information can be found on the Payments page on the website (<https://lww-va.org/39th-biennial-convention/2019conventionpay/>)

From the President

Sue Lewis

April – flowers bringing May showers? I hope not – we've had enough rain for a while! Spring has sprung, and I smile every time I see a daffodil, pansy or any pretty blooming thing! April also brings several religious holidays; Equal Pay Day (9th), Earth Day (22nd), Arbor Day (26th), and several lesser-known commemorations.

League-wise, April begins the round of local league Annual Meetings – many State Board members will be visiting their liaison leagues at those meetings. The General Assembly returns to Richmond for the override session to deal with vetoes and amendments that Governor Northam signed in March. We are pleased that he vetoed several bills that we opposed and made amendments to the budget for initiatives that we supported.

Speaking of initiatives that we supported, we are very gratified that Virginia has made the first step toward an independent redistricting process, one of our priority issues. The Constitutional Amendment to set up an independent commission to produce the redistricting maps in 2021 has passed the first session of the General Assembly; it must pass

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again in the 2020 session in order to go to the voters in November 2020. We worked very closely with the architect of the amendment, OneVirginia2021, to make sure that citizens let their legislators know that the time has come to end gerrymandering in Virginia!

We lost the fight for Virginia to be the 39th state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution, but not for lack of trying. Leaguers were very involved in vigils and other attempts to get legislative approval.

This edition of the Voter Express has a lot of good articles; please read them, especially the first page with all the information needed to register for the 39th Convention of LWV-VA in Norfolk on May 19 and 20. **Deadline for registering and hotel reservations is April 25.**

Advocacy Challenge

Deb Wake

We've had a great response to this year's Advocacy Challenge and we're in the final stretch. Deadline to report advocacy is April 30th. Please use the [webform](#) to report your actions or contact actioncoordinator@lww-va.org. You can report all state-level advocacy occurring between October 15th and April 30th. Prizes of \$650, \$200, and \$100 will be awarded to the most active leagues (weighted relative to size) at the Convention in Norfolk. Hurry to get your advocacy counted—it could make the difference for your league!

Voter Services

Maggi Luca

The State Board asked how our local leagues were dealing with some of the Voter Service activities we do such as VOTE411, High School Registration, and registration at Naturalization ceremonies this year.

For this survey, of our 14 local leagues, Richmond, Lynchburg, Williamsburg, Arlington, Washington County, Prince William and Fairfax responded. Since the State League has paid the VOTE411 costs for all our state legislature primary and general elections, every responding league agreed to do their Senate and Delegate

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races.

Most leagues reported that they wanted to provide VOTE411 guides for some if not all, of their local races this year. Local Leagues must pay the 411 expenses for local elections. They must contact Megan Brown (mbrown@lww.org) for information and assistance to begin.

Registering high school students is a great experience. High School Government teachers often invite the LWV to register students at several times during the year. Some leagues work with their Office of Elections or INSPIRE™ or the Bar Association. The Governor's Challenge offers prizes to high schools that register a percentage of their students. Schools are encouraged to contact the LWV for help.

Registering new citizens at Naturalization ceremonies is so rewarding. Leagues who provide these services are thrilled.

All these incredible activities take time and planning. Many hands make light work.

LWV-VA Northern Virginia Local Leagues Receive \$25,000 Grant

Linda Garvelink

In early October 2018, the LWV-VA was approached by the Greater Washington Community Foundation (GWCF) about the League's work in Northern Virginia. GWCF advised that it had grant money available for the purpose of promoting increased voter education, voter registration, and voting in underserved areas.

The LWV-VA Executive Committee approved the LWV-VA Education Fund treasurer to administer the GWCF Grant, as required, restricted to use by four local Leagues in Northern Virginia: Arlington County, Fairfax Area, Loudoun County, and the Prince William Area. Within a week or two of proposal submission, the Greater Washington Community Foundation advised LWV-VA that a \$25,000 grant was approved. Grant funds are designated for design, development, translation and printing of voter education materials and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) promotion. The NOVA Leagues also may use the funds to advertise and host voter education, including meet-the-candidate forums for under-

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served communities in Northern Virginia.

Each NOVA local League appointed one volunteer for the “Grant Working Group”: Kathy Matusiak, LWV-VA; Sidney Johnson, LWV-VA; Joanne McAlpine, LWV-VA; and Carol Proven, LWV-VA. Maggi Luca, Trustee, and Linda Garvelink, Trustee & Treasurer represent the LWV-VA Education Fund.

Immediately, the Group determined that all Leagues – not just those in NOVA – need translated voter service materials to meet the needs of our diverse, and often underserved, communities. They agreed that the Grant funds should be coordinated with the League’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) objectives.

Additionally, they agreed that portable document format (PDF) versions of materials produced with Grant funds, including translations, would be made available to their sister LWV-VA local Leagues via the LWV-VA website. Unfortunately, printed materials cannot be given to other local Leagues due to the restricted nature of funds expenditures.

The Work Group now is nearing completion of the first phase of the Grant. They have developed a VOTE411 card that will be translated into Korean, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Arabic, and Spanish. They created a “rack card” explaining voting rights for persons with disabilities. Finally, they made a GOTV postcard suitable for use in multiple years for multiple elections. These documents are all in the final stages of professional design and will be printed – the printed copies will be distributed to the NOVA local Leagues.

The NOVA local Leagues are gearing up to use the remaining Grant funds for expenditures for services to underserved communities in their areas. For example, some will develop, translate, and print voting information (“Facts for Voters”) specific to their counties, including poll locations, and much more detailed candidate and/or issue information. The Grant expires on October 31, 2019.

Lesson Learned: If there is a “community foundation” in your League’s area, the LWV-VA Education Fund can work with you to submit the Grant and administer the funds. Most grants

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require distribution to a 501(c)(3) organization and are restricted to educational purposes.

VOTER PROTECTION

Carol Noggle

Virginia vs Florida: Who is winning? (Not basketball)

How does Virginia’s Voter Protection and Election Integrity measures compare with Florida’s recent issues – felons’ restoration of voting rights, rejected mail-in absentee ballots because of signature mismatch, and uncounted mail-in absentee ballots that arrived late?

1. Right to Vote, including felons:

Florida: 2018-19: Florida voters passed a Constitutional Amendment (Amendment 4) in 2018 to restore the voting rights of released felons who have completed their sentences. It was a restoration of rights measure but certainly not universal enfranchisement. Amendment 4 did not restore rights of felons guilty of murder – even attempted murder and manslaughter. It did not restore voting rights of felons convicted of a sexual offense. Now some Florida legislators want to limit eligibility with implementation measures that would require payment of fees. It is also not clear what completion of a sentence means.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/florida-felon-voting-rights-restoration-bill-draws-concerns/2019/03/19/33a603de-4a69-11e9-8cfc-2c5d0999c21e_story.html?utm_term=.c5698b6196c6

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/florida-republicans-are-trying-to-thwart-both-justice-and-the-will-of-the-people/2019/03/21/40882db4-4b47-11e9-93d0-64dbcf38ba41_story.html?utm_term=.de284e570d4c

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/florida-wrestles-over-felon-voting-rights-restoration/2019/03/25/7ffada58-4f4a-11e9-bdb7-44f948cc0605_story.html?utm_term=.949f5d8d7da5

Virginia: Virginia’s Constitution only provides for restoration of felons’ rights by the Governor

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who has authority with executive clemency. Governor Northam is following the restoration process that is stated in Governor McAuliffe's Executive Order. Felons apply after release from incarceration and completion of probation. They do not need to complete payment of fees. Completion of probation is reported to the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Voting rights have been restored to thousands of released felons.

So, Virginia is ahead of Florida in restoration of felons' rights.

However, a Virginia Constitutional Amendment is needed to ensure universal voting rights of all eligible Virginia residents who are at least 18 and have U.S. citizenship. That would include felons. The 2019 Constitutional Amendment proposals did **not** survive. LWV-VA uses the LWVUS principle for voting rights for advocacy: "*The League believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote.*" Hence, incarcerated citizens should have the right to vote; thus, eliminating the need for a restoration process. The Virginia Constitution needs to be changed.

2. Signature Match Required?

Florida: Ballots of some Voters in Florida and Georgia were rejected because the signatures on their mail-in ballot did not match what was on their voter registration form. These Voters had to bring verification to an election office by 5:00 pm on election day. This was very difficult when a Voter would not know that their ballot was rejected. This "Vote-by-Mail Ballot Cure" did not prevent the problem of uncounted ballots. A federal judge ruled that Florida's signature-match standards were unconstitutional.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/parkland-youths-ballots-were-rejected-at-much-higher-rate-than-state-average-in-november-election-research-finds/2019/03/24/1745cdc8-3c31-11e9-aaae-69364b2ed137_story.html?utm_term=.51959427925a

Virginia: Virginia does not compare signatures so it would not have rejected these ballots. Bills to require signature matching in Virginia have been rejected. Virginia leads again.

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3. Late arrival of mail-in ballots:

Florida: 5,464 ballots were not counted in Broward County in 2018

An ACLU report issued in September concluded that Florida's vote-by-mail system disenfranchises younger voters as well as racial and ethnic minorities. Many of the ballots that arrived late were from new young voters who became active after the shooting in Parkland. The students insisted that they mailed the ballots in time to arrive on election day. Overseas and military ballots are accepted up until 10 days after election in Florida.

Virginia: Late mail-in ballots are not counted.

They must arrive by 7 pm on election day. Voters are urged to be sure to request and mail the ballots well ahead of election day.

No winner here. Should Virginia change the election day deadline?

4. Next "season" or in a future "season?"

Will Virginia pass a Constitutional Amendment for true universal voting rights?

Virginia 2019: No bill for a Constitutional Amendment passed.

When can we change our Virginia Constitution?

It is a long-term project. A bill must pass with the same exact language in 2021 and 2022 and then be on the November 2022 ballot.

5. Virginia's Voter Protection goals:

A. A guaranteed constitutional right to vote that the government cannot take away.

The LWVUS principle applies in Virginia.

Timeline:

2020 General Assembly (GA): retain awareness and garner support

2021 GA: first year for Constitutional Amendment

2021: Election of Delegates

2022: Second year for CA proposal the same as in 2021.

2022: November: CA on ballot

B. Continue to **Reject** any proposal for signature matching on mail-in ballots or requests

C. Support measures to improve on-time delivery of mail-in ballots.

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D. Oppose proof of citizenship to register to vote.

E. Oppose verification of a match of social security number, name and birth date in SSA database (e.g. SB1038 that failed in 2019) that would put registration applications on hold.

<https://www.npr.org/2018/11/03/663937578/judge-rules-against-georgia-election-law-calling-it-a-severe-burden-for-voters>

<https://ideastations.org/radio/news/critics-see-echoes-georgia-exact-match-voter-registration-bill>

6. TBD: Some 2019 bills need action by legislators during the reconvened General Assembly Session on April 3rd.

On the agenda will be bills that the Governor vetoed, recommended changes to, or amended.

The League strongly supports Vetoes of these bills: HB2764, SB1038, HB2270, SB1156, HB2269, HB2261, and HB2253.

How Does the League Select Issues for Emphasis?

Amy Hjerstedt

In League, *Program* means the issues that we choose for concerted study, education and action at local, state and national levels. Program can include both education and action.

The issues you care about can have a voice in LWV. *Program Planning* is a thoughtful process that makes LWV the grassroots organization with a focus on community and member concerns and issues. Each League member could influence the selection of issues where the local, state, and national League will focus time, talent and money.

Every two years, members of local Leagues engage in *Program Planning*. Based on the results of this, the Board of Directors makes recommendations to the biennial convention delegates about the program to be adopted for the coming two-year period.

DEI Webinars

Chris Carson

LWVUS will be hosting three webinars on DEI this Spring. Topics will include knowledge sharing on terms and theories in the DEI space and

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how and why DEI should intersect with your League work. All League members with an interest in these important topics are invited to attend. All webinars will be recorded and shared on the League Management Site.

Webinars will be held in March, April, and May on the fourth Thursday from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm ET. Contact Membership@lwv.org for more information.

LWVUS Hosts Women of Congress Reception

Chris Carson

Earlier this month, the League of Women Voters of the United States hosted a reception for the female members of Congress to celebrate the record number of women serving in the House and Senate this year. We heard from five Congresswomen, three of whom are League members themselves.

"I represent Pennsylvania's new 5th congressional district...Thanks to the League of Women Voters, we now have compact, continuous, and constitutional districts."

—Rep. Mary Gay Scanlan (D-PA)

"...Thank you all for being in League and for watching all of these wonderful women come in. We are 127 women today. And so that's a great number...[but] that's only 24% of the Congress. What we need now is 50%."

—Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA)

"You are the gold standard to the members...the LWV enjoy a status in communities all over the country, what you put out, information you put together is something that is trusted by the voters...As long as we have a vibrant League of Women Voters across the country, then our democracy is going to thrive."

—Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA)

League Urges Support for HR4

Chris Carson

LWVUS sent a letter to the U.S. House urging Representatives to support HR4, the Voting Rights Advancement Act. This legislation is a direct

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response to the *Shelby v. Holder* decision in 2013. It will modernize the coverage formula in the Voting Rights Act ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

League Featured in Book About Voting Rights

Chris Carson

The League of Women Voters is featured prominently in a new book about positive voting rights reforms by election law expert Professor Joshua A. Douglas. [Vote for US: How to Take Back Our Elections and Change the Future of Voting](https://joshuaadouglas.com/book-tour/) presents an encouraging assessment of current efforts to make our voting system more accessible, reliable, and effective. The book tells the stories of how everyday Americans are working to take back our democracy, one community at a time, by expanding voter eligibility, enhancing accessibility, taking back redistricting, fixing campaign finance, transforming civics education, and more. According to LWV president Chris Carson, "Douglas's ability to tell the stories of real Americans working to improve our electoral process paints a hopeful picture of our democracy. This inspiring book will leave readers optimistic about the strength of our country and the values for which it stands." Check out the Author's Book Tour on his website and feel free to invite him for your own events at:

<https://joshuaadouglas.com/book-tour/>

Need a Reason to Come to Convention?

Martha Rollins

Welcome state League members to the 39th Biennial Convention in Norfolk! Come early on Friday, May 17, 2019! Observe the state board in action. Four Amtrak trains come from D.C., Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Newport News to Harbor Park in Norfolk. We can meet your train! Two of the four complete the final leg from Newport News to Norfolk by bus. If you are driving, you need to know that self-parking earns you a discount at the Main Street Garage at 230 E. Main Street (\$15 instead of the regular rate of \$20).

Ride the Tide, take the ferry across the Elizabeth River, include Sherry's historic walking tour Olde Towne Portsmouth, enjoy Norfolk's restaurants. Convention check-in begins at 5 pm on Friday, at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott, 235 E. Main

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Street, Norfolk VA 23510. Dinner groups will move out at 5:15, 6:00, 6:30, and 7:00 pm.

Here are reasons to come to all events and meet other League members. Saturday plenary speaker is Susan Carty LWVUS (Pennsylvania State League President), *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*. Luncheon speaker is Christy Coleman, CEO of the American Civil War Museum—*Diversity: Why and How to Be Inclusive*. Sunday morning plenary speaker is Ron Carlee, PDA, Old Dominion University, *Defending Democracy on All Levels*. The Saturday afternoon workshop topics are: Innovation and Infrastructure, Women's Issues, Redistricting Reform: Now to 2021, Election Security and Integrity, Seeing Sea Level Rise from Ground Zero, Grab Bag of Hot Button Issues. Find a caucus after dinner. Join a League Management Session after breakfast on Sunday morning. Walk and talk along the Elizabeth River Trail on Sunday at sunrise.

Bid on items in the silent auction. Check out the book display and the wares of all the Leagues.

Order a T-shirt—VOTE! Democracy is not a spectator sport! Red, blue, black; crew or V-neck. Order on line and pick up at the Convention or Annual Meeting (save mailing charges) at <https://www.customink.com/fundraising/lwvshr>.

A Heartfelt Thank You

As the Women's History Month has just passed, it is appropriate to thank all you hard working leaguers – those who made the Women's Legislative Roundtable Work, those who lobbied and advocated for the ERA amendment, those who garnered new members, those who did the behind the scenes work, those who met with delegates and senators, those who spent countless hours making democracy work. We may be standing on the shoulders of giants, all the suffragists who preceded us, but the work is far from over. There are currently so many challenges, it is more important than ever to work together to be strong in speaking truth to power.