From Our President: My Secret Power

Deb Wake, President LWV of Virginia

I’ll let you in on a secret that I tried to keep hidden most of my life: I grew up poor. All of my life, I was keenly aware of my lack of standing—my lack of power. So I observed and tried to learn the “proper way” to do things. People who grow up advantaged understand some of the privileges they have but there is a lot they do not comprehend.

Many years ago, when my husband and I taught 8th grade Sunday School, we did an exercise with the kids to explain how homeless people aren’t “others.” They could be regular people who are just one unexpected medical bill or car repair away from living on the streets. Being homeless doesn’t mean you’re a bad person or a drug addict. We laid out an example of someone living on a minimum wage income and incurring regular expenses like rent, food, and utilities and then the economic impact of an unforeseen expense. The kids struggled to understand why our imaginary person didn’t just go to family for help. It was a simple math problem to me and to my husband (who also grew up poor), but it was hard for the kids to imagine the lack of resources available to the poor.

I remember hearing this story on the radio several years ago: https://is.gd/a61iSM During the Great Recession, studies found that charitable giving actually rose for poor and middle-income people because they were the most empathetic. Charitable giving among the rich fell.

What does my growing up poor have to do with the League? I recently realized that my experiences are my Power. I can speak for those with less who have no voice because I know what it’s like to actually be poor and to struggle paying bills and what it is to go without health insurance or savings. Recently, the board voted to establish a scholarship fund to help members attend some League events. (more info found on page 6)

Joan Porte and I represented LWVVA at LWVUS Council for four days last week where there was a lot of focus on DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion). The theme of the 2019 Council was the Power of our Transformation. I hope that I can use my experiences of living across the state (geographic diversity; which I touched in last month’s newsletter) and my struggles with poverty to illustrate different types of diversity. I believe the League is more than a bunch of old white women. I believe many of us have secret (and not so secret) powers. I envision the strength of a diverse group of members and the strength of our combined powers. We can truly be transformative.

In This Issue

From Our President: My Secret Power.....................1
Notes from LWVUS Council.................................2
“Learning Between the Lines”.............................2
What is Our New 19th Amendment?......................2
Focus On: International Covenant On Civil And Political Rights.....................................................3
LWVUS Volunteer Lobby Corps – June 2019........4
Election News.....................................................5
LWV-VA Scholarships for LWV-VA Events ............6
Communications Team.......................................7
LEW Discontinues on June 30, 2020!...............7
Did You Know?.................................................8
Save This Date LWVNCA Workshop.................8
Important Dates..............................................8
“Learning Between the Lines”

Joan Porte, 1st VP LWV Virginia

When you go to something like Council, you learn in the formal sessions and get to a chance to exchange ideas during the breaks. It was there that I gleaned several good ideas from fellow Leaguers. For example, the Colorado League does “candid-ating”. This is a sort of a speed dating for candidates. They hold these events at popular restaurants and serve light refreshments. Each candidate sits at a small table and voters meet them for five minutes at a time. When time is up, the voters move to another table. This affords a more intimate setting than a debate or forum and allows even the shyest of voter the chance to question the candidate.

To further our DEI goals, the Tennessee League hosts “get to know you teas” with members of various religious and immigrant communities. Many Leagues have appointed liaisons to visit events and meetings sponsored by these communities. They have reported success with establishing relationships because the same League person visits every time.

Several Leagues have “Vote411.org” public service announcements broadcast at local movie theaters.

Holding informative events on topics such as ranked choice voting and gerrymandering in local bars and restaurants frequented by young people is proving to be successful for many. Several Leagues have demonstrated ranked choice voting by holding “rank the IPA” events at local breweries. It is all about reaching people where they are!

This is a great idea for a busy world. Many Leagues are developing “short term commitment” programs. The purpose is to find quick work that takes a short period to complete. For instance, starting a “tweet campaign” and have two people tweet every day for 5 – 10 minutes or asking 20 people to get one list of signatures for a petition every month. This is a great way to engage busy people who may be overwhelmed with the idea of taking on one huge project.

Whatever ideas you have, please share them with other members and Leagues so that we can share that wealth of knowledge with others.

What is Our New 19th Amendment?

Joan Porte, 1st VP LWV Virginia

That was the question LWVUS President, Chris Carson, posed to the members attending National Council. If the League was born one hundred years ago around the 19th Amendment – the amendment giving women the right to vote – then what cause do we coalesce around in our next 100 years? Chris hinted that the answer might be around a new Constitutional amendment. This one would grant voting rights to all Americans eighteen years or older.

This brings to mind the current campaign of the Virginia ACLU to institute a similar amendment to the Virginia Constitution. The ACLU wants Virginia to enact a concise constitutional amendment that repeals the current lifetime ban on voting for people convicted of felonies and inserts an affirmative right to vote in Virginia that cannot be abridged by law.

This will be a heavy lift both state and nationally but we should not let that stop us. The right for all citizens to cast a ballot is the fundamental building block to a sound and secure Democracy.

Speaking of wild ideas. We had a fun session at Council in which we wrote down our BHAGs (big, hairy, audacious goals.) In no particular order, the following were the top BHAGs of Council attendees:

• Promoting voter engagement and improving voter turnout;
• Protecting voting and promoting the Constitutional amendment guaranteeing a right to vote;
• Getting big money and dark money out of elections;
• Ending gerrymandering;
• Passing the ERA.

There is no group better able to make these dreams a reality than the League of Women Voters and while they may seem daunting, well, we never let that stop us in the past!
Focus On: International Covenant On Civil And Political Rights

Review by: UN Observer Jill Follows(VA); CSW63 Delegates Savanna Jackson Mapelli(PA), Kathleen Montgomery(CA), Sheila Denn(NC), Anu Sahai(VA), Susan Sherer(PA), ErinLeigh Darnley(NY)

Democracy is one of the core values of the United Nations. Democratic principles respecting human rights and supporting periodic genuine elections through universal suffrage and fundamental political freedoms are enshrined in United Nations conventions.

Today’s review of the INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS is the second in a year-long series of monthly reviews of United Nations human rights conventions and treaties. All of the reviews are written by a team of League members from across the country who are inspired by the League’s history of human rights advocacy and motivated to start a fresh dialogue about the impact these historical UN conventions have today on the League’s principle of “Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.”

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (https://is.gd/psu9XH) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in March 1966, nearly 20 years after the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Twenty years may seem like a long time but the wait was worth it. The ICCPR went a long way toward strengthening the international human rights movement because it operationalized the philosophies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The ICCPR intends that political and civil rights will be respected strictly and without any reservations by the Member States. The Preamble to the treaty sets forth the ideal of human beings living free and enjoying civil and political rights. The ICCPR includes rights found in the USA Bill of Rights and French Declaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen. The first couple Articles of the treaty highlight the foundational principles that free people have the right of self-determination and entitlement to human rights without regard for any distinction such as race, color, sex, language, political opinion, national origin, etc. https://is.gd/kKIkzL

Each and every one of the first 27 Articles in the ICCPR is important, but Article 25 is mentioned here because of its particular relevance to the LWV’s principle of Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy. Article 25 states that the right to vote is a basic human right and the foundation of democracy.

Article 25: Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

Every country that ratified the ICCPR committed to protect the broad range of human rights declared in the treaty, subject to any Reservations, Understandings and Declarations, made by a Member State at the time of ratification. 172 Member States had ratified the treaty by the end of 2018.

The U.S. Senate ratified the ICCPR in 1992 but it watered down its protections by issuing a Declaration simultaneously, that stated the treaty was “not self-executing.” This Declaration pulled the teeth out of the treaty and compelled all U.S. individuals claiming violations of their human rights to political and civil freedoms to rely on some other law, not the ICCPR, to recognize and enforce their human rights. https://is.gd/7ewL2R (Note especially III (1) stating “That the United States declares that the provisions of Articles 1-27 of the Covenant are not self-executing.”)

The ICCPR set up a monitoring body to oversee the progress of the State parties that ratified the treaty. https://is.gd/vEFo4K The monitoring body, known as the Human Rights Committee, is made up of 18 experts from all regions of the world. The committee meets three times a year. It is tasked with reviewing and commenting on the State Reports submitted by the State parties to the ICCPR. The State Reports purport to outline the legal and practical measures taken by the State party to implement the treaty. The USA’s implementation of the ICCPR is up for review this
year, 2019. The Human Rights Committee provided the USA Government with a List of Issues that must be covered within the body of its Fifth Periodic State Report. The Human Rights Committee wants to hear from the USA government on specific topics, including the right to vote and take part in political affairs: https://bit.ly/2RFZ1pi. (Scroll down to the USA and then click on the first document called LIST OF ISSUES PRIOR TO REPORTING (LoIPR) The 126th session of the Human Rights Committee will meet in Geneva, Switzerland between July 1-26, 2019. The Committee sessions are usually live streamed and open to the public.

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in the USA had the opportunity to submit shadow reports to the Committee on Human Rights. Fifty one CSOs did just that in late 2018 and early 2019. Their shadow reports drew attention to human rights violations ranging from the death penalty to immigration. However, only one CSO, the Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute, addressed the need for the USA government to take a long hard look at the need to Empower Voters. Defend Democracy and create a national human rights institution and support human rights education. This Institute acknowledged an “ongoing and systematic attack on the right to vote at the federal and state levels. While most agencies do not work on voting issues, it is vital to emphasize the need for laws and policies that promote, rather than curtail, access to the ballot box – an essential component of a democracy. The right to vote must be protected as a cornerstone of democracy and foundation for basic human rights. Past UN recommendations remain unheeded, with dire impacts for U.S. elections and democracy.”

https://is.gd/Ac9rxT. (Scroll down to USA and then click on Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Institute & International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies); See also the (Common) Core Document.

There are opportunities to participate in the preparation of a shadow report, either alone or in partnership with other civil society organizations. The LWV’s vast resources and contributions about local, state and federal restrictions on voting rights, such as felony disenfranchisement, voter suppression (especially among minority voters) gerrymandering, and financial improprieties will shine a spotlight on our core principles and the human rights of democracy and voter empowerment. In the meantime, there are opportunities for local and state Leagues to develop best practices for educating and communicating the work of the United Nations to our elected officials, thus accelerating the implementation of universal human rights.

The 63rd Commission on the Status of Women, held March 2019 at UN headquarters in New York City, concluded that the ICCPR is one of many human rights conventions that “…provide an international legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all women and girls, throughout their life cycle.”


The ICCPR, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (next month’s review) form the International Bill of Human Rights.

LWVUS Volunteer Lobby Corps – June 2019

Jackie Coolidge, LWVUS Lobby Corps

The LWVUS Volunteer Lobby Corps had a very active spring in 2019. The first few months were focused primarily on the “For the People” Act (a.k.a. “H.R. 1”), which passed the U.S. House of Representatives on a party-line vote on March 8. The Lobby Corps, as usual, attempted to persuade potential swing voters, in this case many moderate Republicans (since we knew all or a great majority of Democratic representatives were in favor of the bill), but there was a lot of opposition from Republicans against the idea of a new small-donor matching fund for public financing of federal political campaigns. Most also voiced objection to a new Federal holiday for election day (which was deleted from the Senate version of the bill), and seemed unenthusiastic about other LWV priorities, such as same-day voter registration, automatic voter registration, and greater transparency in campaign finance (the “DISCLOSE” Act, which the LWV has supported for several years). A few Republicans voiced support for independent redistricting commissions, and many said they would support enhanced “election security” to protect against foreign interference.

The Republican Senators we targeted as we attempted to encourage at least a hearing for the bill expressed mostly the same views as those in the House of Representatives. The Senate version of the bill has been assigned to the Finance Committee (because of the campaign finance provisions) and some of the
moderate Republicans volunteered that they supported the provisions for “election security” but probably little else. Unfortunately, even that element has been blocked by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell from coming up for a hearing.

We also lobbied strenuously for the Voting Rights Advancement Act in the House of Representatives (H.R. 4), which focuses specifically on the sections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (i.e., those requiring some states and jurisdictions with a history of voting rights violations to obtain “pre-clearance” from the U.S. Justice Department before making new changes to voter registration or election procedures) that had been struck down by the Supreme Court in 2013. In the past, re-authorization of the VRA was overwhelmingly bipartisan, without any significant opposition whatsoever. This bill was carved out of H.R. 1 to give more time for in-depth research to address the Supreme Court’s concern that the bill was out of date (especially regarding which states or jurisdictions still had relatively recent violations that might warrant pre-clearance). Lobby Corps members again focused primarily on Republican representatives, but did not hear a strong commitment from them to support the new bill. We even heard a number of Republican offices object to the bill on the basis of “state’s rights” to oversee elections without any involvement from the Federal authorities except after a court order (which can be extremely slow).

The Lobby Corps will continue to press on both H.R. 1 and H.R. 4, but did manage to include an easier assignment to lobby in favor of the Women’s History commemorative coin program (H.R. 1923). We all remember the U.S. Mint’s state quarters and the series on National Parks – this new bill would create a new set of state quarters with the theme of women’s history and commemorating the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment for women’s suffrage. Every state would get its own quarter, with the Governor allowed to nominate a woman from the state to be featured. In most cases, we expect Governors will establish a commission and encourage essay contests and graphic design contests that will become a great forum for discussion of women’s history, historic women of interest in each state, and an inspiration for young people and history buffs around the country. Our lobbying visits for this bill have so far been overwhelmingly positive, with both sides of the aisle hailing it as an “easy ask!”

Election News

Carol Noggle, Voter Protection

**Topic #1: Can candidates’ participation in VOTE411 voter guide affect results?**

The June 11th Primary elections had 16 Senate races with 35 candidates and 19 House races with 42 candidates. All candidates were invited to participate in our VOTE411 guide. Some analysis of participation vis a vis results may help assess the effectiveness of this voter education tool.

Thirteen of 35 Senate candidates responded to the VOTE411 questions —37.1%.

Of those 13 respondents 5 won their race = 38%.

Of course, participating in VOTE411 cannot be determined as the cause of success.

A higher percentage of House candidates responded — 25 of the 42 House candidates = 59.5%

Of the 25 respondents 12 won their contest = 48%

Further analysis of interest could be the percentage of incumbents who responded or the percentage of Democrats vs Republicans.

To see the responses, or lack of them, from all the candidates in Virginia (or in any state) anyone can search on [https://www.vote411.org/](https://www.vote411.org/).

These three questions were asked of almost all of the House and Senate candidates:

1. Please explain your policy regarding seeking, accepting, limiting, and reporting of funds of finance your campaign.
2. What is the issue in your district that you believe has the highest priority for legislative action?
3. What is a statewide issue that has highest priority for you?

In addition to the House and Senate races, some local primary races in these counties were published on VOTE411: Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, and Prince William.

**Topic #2. Virginia State Board of Elections membership changes.**

The members of the Virginia State Board of Elections (SBE) has changed but no change was made to the number of members. Legislation (SB1455 and HB1620) to change the number of members to 5 or 6 had significant support from legislators and from

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several sectors of the election community but did not escape the Governor’s veto pen. Naming the SBE members and the appointment of the Commissioner of Elections remains with the Governor. A Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study had recommended changing the appointment process to reduce the finding of partisanship in the Department.

The SBE members are Chairman Bob Brink, Vice-Chairman Dr. John O’Bannon, and Secretary Jamilah D. LeCruise. 

Meetings of the SBE are open to the public. Minutes and agenda are posted online.

**Topic #3. Voter Registration process has minimal change**

A new category for Voters was established with SB1244. It adds to the list of protected voters any person who has been approved to be a foster parent pursuant to the law. Protected voters are permitted by law to provide a post office box address located within the Commonwealth in addition to the voter's residence street address. This would be the address included on (i) lists of registered voters and persons who voted, (ii) voter registration records made available for public inspection, and (iii) lists of absentee voter applicants. That change is in Section 4 of the voter registration form. For the sake of privacy, this status will be shown in the electronic poll book at check-in to vote so that the person's residence address will not be stated audibly.

There are no changes to the law regarding the third party voter registration process.

“If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.” S.Truth

**LWV-VA Scholarships for LWV-VA Events**

Linda Garvelink, Treasurer

LWV-VA is committed to Diversity Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) and has established an annual "scholarship" account to assure that all members have the opportunity to attend LWV-VA events regardless of economic status or whether the member’s local League does not have a reimbursement budget, or is fully committed to such a budget. Scholarships may be applied for to attend LWV-VA educational events such as: Fall Workshops and Pre-session Legislative Round Table.

If you would like to attend a LWV-VA paid event but find the registration to be cost-prohibitive, please contact the LWV-VA Treasurer at Treasurer@lwv-va.org.

For each event, depending on the availability of funds, the LWV-VA will provide scholarships to up to three (3) members-at-large or members of a MAL Unit (LWV-VA does not have any MAL units as of publication).

In addition, for each event, depending on the availability of funds, the LWV-VA will provide scholarships to as many as two (2) local League members.

Limitations:

1. Availability of funds
2. LWV-VA Treasurer will verify with member’s local League to determine whether or not local funds are available.
3. No member will eligible for funding for more than two (2) events in any LWV-VA fiscal year.
4. Except for MALs, funds are not available for payment of LWV-VA Council (2020) or LWV-VA Biennial Convention (2021) registration fees.
5. If a member accepts a LWV-VA scholarship for an event but does not attend the event without at least 24 hours’ notice, that member shall not be eligible for another scholarship for a minimum of one additional LWV-VA fiscal year. For example, if a member is granted a scholarship to attend the December 4, 2019 Presession in LWV-VA fiscal year 2019-20 but does not attend the event without 24 hours’ advance notice, that member will not be eligible for another scholarship until LWV-VA fiscal year 2021-22.
6. Scholarships are available only for registration fees; scholarship funds are not available for travel or lodging expenses related to the event.

In order to increase availability of scholarship funds, LWV-VA needs your help and donations.
If you would like to donate to the LWV-VA Operating Fund scholarship fund for Fall Workshops, please go to www.lwv-va.org/donate/ and choose the “not tax deductible” option. If you would like to donate to the LWV-VA Education Fund scholarship fund for Preession & League Day, please go to www.lwv-va.org/donate/ and choose the “tax deductible” option. Or you may send a check payable to LWV-VA for the Op Fund, or payable to LWV-VA Education Fund, to LWV-VA Treasurer, 804 Ridge Pl, Falls Church, VA 22046. Please indicate “scholarship” in the memo line to assure proper allocation.

**Communications Team**

Do you have some special expertise you want to bring to the table? We are still adding new team members. If interested send an email to communications@lwv-va.org.

Your current team members are Carol Lindstrom, Carolyn Caywood, Deb Wake, Julia Tanner, Leelynn Brady, Mary Bull, Pat Cochran, and Sherry Zachry.

Deb Wake and Julia Tanner have supervisory roles and are not as engaged as some of the other folks. Leelynn Brady is the Google Docs specialist, Mary Bull is WordPress website specialist, Carolyn Caywood covers Facebook, Sherry Zachry is heading up the proofreader team, Pat Cochran is our cyber security guru, and Carol Lindstrom plugs holes like website, email, newsletter and fills in gaps where needed.

The team's mission (this may be changing a bit in the future, but have to start somewhere, right?):

> Work to empower voters and defend democracy through effective communication to the public, elected officials, and our members. To provide local Leagues and members with the tools and resources to do the same.

You can contact the team at communicationsteam@lawv-va.org with any questions or suggestions. We are here to serve you, but you have to let us know what you need for your local Leagues.

**LEW Discontinues on June 30, 2020!**

We are back in the trenches with LEW (League Easy Web) which 5 of our local Leagues still use. The upgrade to MyLO is an option but there are other alternatives as well. Both SquareSpace and WordPress are used by some of our Virginia local Leagues. While I do not know about the hosting options for SquareSpace, I do know that WordPress comes in two forms. There is WordPress.org and there is WordPress.com. Read about the differences between these two at https://is.gd/QJbW8q. While the .com version will host your website through WordPess, the .org version is self-hosted. That means you have to have your own server space. While there are several ways to obtain your own hosting, I am most familiar (and happy with) Dreamhost and you can see their hosting options at https://is.gd/MBNKwU. The 3 year plan is definitely the most economical. At state we do it annually with Shared Unlimited package. The other alternative is to host your WordPress on the LWV-VA hosting package since an unlimited number of websites are allowed. If you choose joining LWV of Virginia, LWV Williamsburg, and LWV Roanoke Valley on our server there is a $50/year cost and we handle all of the back-end stuff on the server. You just need to learn to work with WordPress. The only things that we require is that the official LWV logos be displayed prominently and that you follow any rules concerning online publications from LWVUS.

- Square Space: Arlington, Fairfax
- WordPress: Virginia, Charlottesville, Roanoke Valley, Williamsburg (all but Charlottesville are hosted on the LWV-VA server system)
- MyLO: Falls Church, Montgomery County, South Hampton Roads

MyLO (the new LEW) is currently in use by 3 of our local Leagues and those are listed above. They have a special deal through September where they waive the $200 Setup fee. MyLO is $400/yr and if you want them to transfer your existing site to the MyLO, there is an additional $200. You can read more about MyLO at https://is.gd/Tr51sz.

A word to the wise, when evaluating the different options available, be sure to look at your existing website and make note of how many pages it currently has and how many files you have in storage on that website. Also, what types of files are they? For instance, your current website could be 10 pages total and you may have 286 files stored there. Of the stored files, 102 of them are images, 98 of them are pdf files,
and the remaining 86 are documents. Some of these systems limit the size of your storage space, some restrict certain file types, and some limit image types or sizes.

Also, talk to some of the local League folks managing the different options and ask about their experiences. Your Communications Team will be here to help you all that we can so don't hesitate to send us an email with your questions to communicationsteam@lwv-va.org.

Did You Know?

The 100th Anniversary Toolkit has some great resources. There is an Editorial Calendar on page 14 that will help with scheduling press releases, sending emails, and posting to social media.

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The 100th Anniversary Toolkit has some great resources. There is an Editorial Calendar on page 14 that will help with scheduling press releases, sending emails, and posting to social media.

The 1999 Issue of Positioned for Action (LWV-VA Positions) is on the website at https://is.gd/jnrdTa. On that same page you will find information and a link on how studies are done. Studies are what yield our Positions (https://is.gd/1J5ChC) and our Positions establish the parameters under which we can pursue Action and Advocacy.

Save This Date LWVNCA Workshop

August 10, 10:00 AM - 2:30 PM.

LWVNCA will hold a Summer Workshop of skill-building and sharing League experiences. The workshop will be held at the DC Public Library at Cleveland Park, 3310 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008. (202-741-5989)

The library is located about one block south of the Cleveland Park Metro stop (Red Line) on Connecticut Ave. There is parking available too.

Important Dates

July 1: Beginning of new League year
July 15-19: National Disability Voter Registration Week
July 30: World Day Against Trafficking in Persons
August 26: Women's Equality Day
September 1: Beginning of Voter Registration Month
September 24: National Voter Registration Day