What’s In a Name?

When the League of Women Voters leadership took a hard look at itself and embarked on the transformation roadmap, one thing scrutinized was the name: the League of Women Voters. There was a lot of debate over the name—spilling into the June 2018 National Convention in Chicago. If the League indeed wants to embrace DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), is it enough to welcome members of all genders but still call ourselves the League of Women Voters? Is that giving the wrong message? Is the name exclusionary?

Leadership reasoned that the name should be retained. We are an organization formed predominantly by women with an emphasis on issues important to women. The name has brand value: history, reputation, trust, and authority. We have been around for nearly 100 years—not many organizations have that sort of legacy. We have fought, studied, listened, learned, advocated. We have always had men in our ranks and it was men that voted in 1920 to pass the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote. Today we still have men in our ranks. We have gender-fluid and non-conforming gendered people in our ranks. Many of us identify as women or support women. We are community and we are strong. We are a League.

LWVUS rolled out a new campaign in August called She is Me to highlight our diversity but also what unifies us. We are all unique and together we...
are awesome and strong. Women are finding their voices and running for office and making a difference. We are speaking out against sexual harassment in movements like #MeToo. We are drawing awareness to Domestic Violence—forcing conversations about uncomfortable and deeply personal experiences to say this is not right, this must change. We believe that it is in our power to make our communities better for all of us. We are the League of Women Voters. Won’t you join us?

“What’s in Your Toolkit” - LWV-VA Workshop Report

Janet Gorn, Program Director. LWV-VA & LWV-VA 2019 Fall Workshop Chair

On September 14th seventy-seven attendees met in Fredericksburg to fill their LWV-VA Toolkits with facts and figures, hear interesting speakers provide a window on their wealth of expert insights, and meet fellow League members from all over Virginia. This very successful Workshop provided an abundance of opportunities in the Breakout Sessions to enhance leadership skills through training tutorials and a better understanding of the League’s Legislative Priorities and Policy Program issues.

Alicia Gurrieri, LWVUS, opened the Workshop’s General Session with a presentation on the new www.VOTE411.org a one-stop-shop for election-related information. The importance of this activity was highlighted with a no-cost raffle, “These shoes are made for Voting” Tote Bag. Ronald Brown, Partnership Coordinator with the U.S. Census Bureau’s Philadelphia Regional Office, was next up. He elaborated on the complicated, challenging process the Bureau is facing in an information age, to collect 2020 U.S. census information. It was noted that the LWVUS is a partner organization and recommended the best way for local Leagues to help with the count, is to join Complete Count Committees. Mr. Brown further discussed resource information available on the Bureau’s website and on the LWVUS website. Alicia Gurrieri, LWVUS, and Deb Wake, LWV-VA, followed with an overview of the Redistricting challenges in Virginia. Last, but not least in gathering useful skills for the LWV-VA Toolkits, Carolyn Caywood, Mary Crutchfield, Carol Noggle, and Julia Tanner, members of the LWV-VA Legislative Committee, walked the attendees through a lively discussion of available legislative aids: 1) The Virginia General Assembly Legislative Information System (LIS), 2) Legislative Visibility and Advocacy Skills, 3) Managing a Local League Legislative Agenda, 4) Lobbying vs Advocacy Action, and 5) Legislative Priorities.

The Workshop included a robust focus on the new LWV-VA Affordable Housing Study, and the need for additional volunteers to join the Study Committee. Affordable Housing is an under-appreciated issue, not only in Virginia but throughout the U.S. To better understand this issue, the Workshop’s keynote luncheon speaker, Erica Sims, Senior Associate for Development and Programs at ADAdvisors, provided a detailed overview of the Affordable Housing issue.

The Workshop Breakout Sessions focused on skill development: Session I: A LWV-VA Program overview and an overview of the scope of work to be accomplished by the current study on Affordable Housing and on the review of LWV-VA Election Positions; Session II: Training Demonstration on Looking for Google Docs and Forms; Session III: The Art of Fund-Raising and Grants; and Session IV: Conducting a Successful Board Meeting.

Governor Northam Announces 2019–2020 Governor’s High School Voter Registration Challenge

Find the resources your local high schools need to be a part of the Challenge at https://lwv-va.org/virginiahsvr/

From Governor Northam’s Press Release:

“RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam today announced the 2019–2020 Governor’s High School Voter Registration Challenge. High schools across the Commonwealth will have the opportunity to compete to register the highest percentage of their voting-age population. Schools that reach or exceed
65 percent registration of their eligible senior class will receive a congratulatory certificate from the Governor. The Governor’s Challenge was created in 2016 and is a partnership of the Office of the Governor and the Virginia Secretaries of Administration and Education, in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Elections, and the League of Women Voters of Virginia.”

Governor’s full Press Release can be found at http://bit.ly/2m7w2PD

VOTE411.org

Betty Cabrera, LWV-VA Voter Services Chair.

Visit our redesigned VOTE411 website. You can register to vote online and find important registration and election dates. Go to VOTE411 to learn about candidates, see their responses to the VOTE411 questions below, find scheduled candidate forums, and more. Simply enter your residential address to discover personalized information.

Earlier this month local Leagues invited every General Assembly candidate to answer questions on matters of importance to Virginia Voters. Those questions were:

- What do you believe is the top priority for your district, and what is your plan to address it?
- What measures, if any, would you support to ensure the right to vote and election integrity?
- Regarding fair redistricting,
  - (1) Do you support the proposal for a Virginia Redistricting Commission and why?
  - (2) If the Constitutional Amendment is adopted, what legislation would you support to implement the commission?
- What solutions would you support to reduce the current level of gun violence in Virginia?

If any of the candidates for your district have not yet responded to the VOTE411 questions, we encourage you to reach out to them as a voter and constituent. A little encouragement from voters could help to prompt them to participate.

Virginia Museum of History & Culture Appeal

Is there a woman whose activism has inspired you?

The Virginia Museum of History and Culture is collecting stories and items for an exhibit that will celebrate Virginia women as drivers of change since 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed granting women the right to vote.

The exhibit is a signature project of the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commemoration.

Opening in March 2020, Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women’s Suffrage to Today will explore the legacies of the suffrage movement with a focus on the unsung heroines who represent grassroots activism today.

We are seeking documents, photos, and objects to tell the stories of women who have brought change to their communities in a variety of ways including:

- Arts and culture
- Business and labor
- Education
- Gender and race equality
- Health and reproductive rights
- Politics
- Social justice
From LWV UN on Women’s Rights

Focus On: CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) (pronounced see-daw)

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

This review of the CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) is the fourth in a year-long series of 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. Democratic principles respecting human rights are enshrined in United Nations conventions.

This review is an introduction to the provisions of CEDAW. It is intended to motivate discussion among our members. Some of our readers have implemented this particular treaty’s provisions in their home communities. We encourage you to use this treaty review as a springboard for sharing your experiences and insights. Even better, please share best practices.

Background: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. It serves as an international bill of rights for women. It consists of a preamble and 30 articles, defines discrimination against women, and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. It leaves no doubt that the UN considers discrimination against women to be a continuing violation of its core principles of equality and respect for human dignity. (Read Document Here)

CEDAW defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

CEDAW Commitments: By ratifying CEDAW, UN Member States commit to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:

- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women; and
- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and to ensure the elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

CEDAW provides the basis for creating equality between men and women by ensuring women’s equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including the right to vote and to stand for election (article 7). Ratifying States Parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms. States parties also agree to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women.
CEDAW is the only human rights treaty that affirms the reproductive rights of women and recognizes that regional and local culture and traditions are the forces shaping gender roles and family relations. Noting the relationship between traditional customs and women’s human rights, the preamble to CEDAW states “that a change in the traditional role of men, as well as the role of women in society and in the family, is needed to achieve full equality of men and women”.

CEDAW affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children.

CEDAW Committee: Countries that have ratified CEDAW commit to submitting national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women monitors the efforts of signatory Member States to comply with CEDAW. The Committee is comprised of 23 independent experts on women’s rights. The Committee reviews the reports of the State parties and issues general recommendations and Concluding Observations. (Read Document Here)

The scope of the Committee is broad. For example, it encompasses the growing consensus among human rights experts that climate change has a significant impact on the enjoyment of human rights. The Committee recently pointed out that Guyana undermines its CEDAW obligation with its plan to begin offshore oil and gas extraction. Once burned, the increased gas emissions will likely lead to increased natural disasters that will disproportionately impact women who are the majority of those people currently living below sea-level.

Sustainable Development Goal #5: The United Nations seeks to expedite the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls and has specifically targeted the elimination of all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere by 2030. (Read Document Here)

LWVUS IMPACT ON ISSUES: In 2002, the LWVUS submitted testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in support of U.S. Senate ratification of CEDAW. (Impact on Issues 2018-2020 at page 41) “In 2011, as the move to ratify CEDAW continued, LWVUS submitted testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on Civil and Constitutional Rights.” (Impact on Issues 2018-2020 at page 42)

USA has not ratified CEDAW: Almost all UN Member States have signed on and or ratified this convention. The United States is among a small minority of countries that have not ratified CEDAW, such as Iran and Sudan. The United States has the dubious distinction of being the only country in the Western Hemisphere and the only industrialized democracy that has not ratified this treaty. Ratification of the Treaty requires the support of 2/3 of the US Senate or 67 votes.

Cities for CEDAW: Many cities and counties in the USA developed creative workarounds in the wake of the US Senate’s failure to ratify CEDAW. Cities funded CEDAW-like Commissions, and some passed Ordinances or Resolutions so that now League members can look to dozens of cities, coast to coast, for inspiration on implementing the human rights provisions of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

From LWV UN on Persons With Disabilities

FOCUS ON: CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (CRPD)

Review by: CSW63 Delegate Susan Sherer(PA), UN Observer Jill Follows(VA); CSW63 Delegates Savanna Jackson Mapelli(PA), Kathleen Montgomery(CA), Sheila Denn(NC), Anu Sahai(VA), ErinLeigh Darnley(NY)
Today’s review of the CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (CRPD) is the fifth in a year-long series of 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.

Democratic principles respecting human rights are enshrined in United Nations conventions.

Background: The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is intended to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities. It reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. CRPD clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities. It identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights and areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

The CRPD, along with its Optional Protocol (OP) were adopted by the United Nations on December 13, 2006, the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century. It went into force on May 3, 2008.

There are currently 177 ratifications to the CRPD and 92 ratifications to its Optional Protocol. http://bit.ly/2me96hk.

(see below for more information on the Optional Protocol)

CRPD Committee: The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities monitors implementation of the Convention. All states parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights are being implemented. Member states initially report within two years of accepting the Convention and thereafter every four years. The Committee makes suggestions and general recommendations on these reports. http://bit.ly/2kFSpLB

The Optional Protocol (OP-CRPD) allows for individual complaints to be submitted to the CRPD Committee. Complaints may only be communicated against a State party that has ratified or acceded to the OP and only upon exhaustion of all available and effective domestic remedies.

USA has Not Ratified CRPD: While President Obama signed the treaty in 2009, the U.S. Senate has still not ratified it. It fell 5 votes short in the Senate in 2012. In 2014, while the Senate Foreign Relations Committee advanced the treaty, the full Senate never took up the vote. http://bit.ly/2kjYEnW.

CRPD Commitments: The general principles of CRPD include respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, independence, non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion, respect for differences and acceptance of disability as part of human diversity and humanity, equality of opportunity, accessibility, equality of sexes, and respect for children with disabilities (Article 3).

Synergy with Impact on Issues: Some of the Articles in the treaty align with the positions of the LWV. These specific Articles are listed below. The list of synergies with Impact on Issues is long but Article 29 in the Convention on Persons with Disabilities speaks to the core mission of the LWV: ensure equal participation in political and public life, including the right to vote, to stand for election, and hold office (Article 29). Countries that ratified this treaty are also accountable to:

- combat stereotypes and prejudices and promote awareness of the capabilities of persons with disabilities (Article 8).
- recognize that all persons are equal before the law and prohibit discrimination on the
basis of a disability, guaranteeing equal legal protection (Article 5).
- protect the physical and mental integrity of persons with disabilities (Article 17).
- prohibit medical or scientific experiments without consent (Article 15).
- protect privacy like that of others (Article 22).
- eliminate obstacles and barriers and ensure that persons with disabilities can access their environment, transportation, public facilities and services, and information and communications technologies (Article 9).
- foster personal mobility and independence through training and assistive technologies (Article 20).
- recognize the right to adequate standard of living and social protection, including public housing, services and assistance (Article 28).
- provide information to the general public in accessible formats and technologies (Article 21).
- eliminate discrimination relating to marriage, family and personal relations (Article 23).
- ensure equal access to primary and secondary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning (Article 24).
- provide the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination (Article 24).
- prohibit discrimination in employment (Article 27).

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) # 10: The United Nations “Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved with the full participation of everyone, including those persons with disabilities. Upholding the rights and ensuring the full inclusion of the world’s one billion persons with disabilities is a moral imperative. It is also a practical necessity if we are to build healthy, sustainable societies to the benefit of all ages and abilities” (Forward to the 2018 UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres) http://bit.ly/2kOwNfX

SDG #10 calls on all Member States to reduce inequalities within countries by promoting social, economic and political inclusiveness of all, including persons with disabilities. http://bit.ly/2mlgKXs

Redistricting Update

Jackie Rivas, LWV Arlington

Virginia has an historic opportunity that we can’t let slip away. In the 2019 General Assembly, our legislators passed House Joint Resolution No. 615. HJR 615 is a constitutional amendment to create a citizen-led redistricting commission to draw the voting districts for the U.S. House of Representatives, and the Senate and the House of Delegates of the Virginia General Assembly in 2021, after the 2020 Census.

This citizen-led redistricting commission would drag the map-drawing out of the smoke-filled back rooms of Richmond and expose it to the cleansing rays of the sun. Half of the sixteen commissioners will be citizen members. Meetings of the commission will be open to the public. It will hold public hearings across the Commonwealth to receive and consider comments from Virginians. And its records and documents will be considered public information.

In 2011, our lawmakers gave us bi-partisan gerrymandered maps. Over a gentleman’s agreement, the Democrats gerrymandered the Senate and the Republicans gerrymandered the House, giving us both racially and partisan gerrymandered districts. Gerrymandering is unacceptable no matter which side does it, because it silences the voice of the voters. The ensuing litigation over bad maps drains our coffers of precious tax dollars.

The racial gerrymander was cured by the courts just in time for the November 2019 election. But partisan gerrymandering has been declared non-justiciable by the U.S. Supreme Court. Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. said that it is up to voters
to cure partisan gerrymandering. So, the burden is on us now.

In Virginia, an amendment to the Constitution must be passed in one year; followed by an election; and then passed a second time, verbatim, with not a comma out of place. The General Assembly passed HJR 615 in the 2019 General Assembly session. We have an election in November. The amendment must again pass the General Assembly in 2020. It would then go on the ballot in November 2020.

In Arlington, we are working hard to inform voters of the opportunity to achieve fair redistricting in 2021. We are reaching out to Virginians at farmers markets and festivals. We are showing up at town halls to ask our legislators their position on the constitutional amendment. We held a game night during which we played map-making board games, competed in a redistricting trivia contest, and heard top-notch elevator speeches on redistricting. Our next initiative will be to monitor our legislators’ responses to the Vote411 questions on redistricting.

It is up to all Virginia lawmakers to do the right thing and pass that constitutional amendment to give us fair maps the first time around. But it is up to us voters to tell them that we want fair maps and will not tolerate gerrymandering by either side. If we fail at our task, we will suffer ten more years of bad maps, endless expensive litigation, and silenced voices. Let’s join forces to ensure that our voices will be heard.

LWVUS Volunteer Lobby Corps September 2019: Voting Rights

Jackie Coolidge, LWVUS Lobby Corps Volunteer

LWVUS Volunteer Lobby Corps initially lobbied in the US House of Representatives in the spring in favor of the Voting Rights Advancement Act (HR4). We all remember the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA), which provided the necessary tools to combat discriminatory treatment of racial and linguistic minorities in voter registration and actual voting. The VRA included a requirement for many states and jurisdictions with a history of such problems to obtain “pre-clearance” from the US Justice Department before making changes to voter registration procedures, redistricting, polling locations/hours, and similar procedures, so that the right to vote would not have to wait for the slow and expensive process of law suits to address violations of voting rights. The pre-clearance requirement had to be renewed periodically by Congress, which happened regularly with large bi-partisan majorities, most recently in 2006. They were signed into law by both Republican and Democratic presidents.

However, in 2013, the Supreme Court case “Shelby County v Holder” ruled in a 5-4 decision that the formula for determining which states/jurisdictions would need pre-clearance was out of date. Almost immediately, many of those state/jurisdictions took advantage of the situation to undertake discriminatory redistricting, to close polling stations, introduce strict new photo ID requirements, and to carry out aggressive purges of voter registration rolls that ended up disenfranchising minority voters. The (negative) “poster child” for such measures was North Carolina, where eventually a federal court ruled that many of the changes appeared to be “surgically designed” to discriminate against ethnic minorities.

HR4 introduces an updated formula for determining the number of violations for states and jurisdictions to face a pre-clearance requirement, based on a “look back” period to ensure that violations are relatively recent. The House leadership then initiated a series of “field hearings” to document recent violations during the spring and summer. On September 10, the Judiciary Committee held a hearing to present the evidence of continuing violations not only in the original states/jurisdictions requiring pre-clearance under the original 1965 VRA but in some cases in states where there hadn’t been many problems previously, such as Ohio (e.g., closure of polling locations and aggressive purges of voter registration rolls based, among other things, on a voter’s failure to exercise
his/her right to vote, or variations in the voter’s name on different government documents).

While the Lobby Corps had visited both Democratic and Republican representatives in the spring, as of the end of the summer, many Democrats had signed on as co-sponsors while no Republicans had done so. Since “HR4” was part of the “leadership package” and such bills have become seen as increasingly partisan over the years, we knew we faced an uphill battle. There is an alternative bill, HR 1799, which was re-introduced by Representative Sensenbrenner (R-WI). He had introduced a similar bill when he had been head of the relevant committee in Congress under Republican leadership, but it had never been brought to the floor, and for the current session, had only 17 co-sponsors, including four Republicans.

Most Republican staffers we visited were not very familiar with either bill, and often not even the issue. Some stressed the need for a bi-partisan bill to have any hope of passage in the Senate. While the bills are similar, the Sensenbrenner bill stipulates that photo ID requirements (no matter how strict) cannot be considered an issue for pre-clearance. While the LWV (and many of our allies, such as the Brennan Center, ACLU, and NAACP) have seen many instances where strict photo ID requirements places a disproportionate burden on many minority communities, the LWV is encouraging dialog and negotiation within Congress to ensure passage of a bill that will restore the vital pre-clearance requirement. Some congressional staffers in Republican offices agreed with the principle, so we encouraged them to discuss the issue with their bosses and reach out to colleagues to sign on to either bill to help it move forward.

LWV-VA Scholarship Fund Helps 10 Members Attend Fall Workshops

Linda Garvelink, Treasurer, LWV-VA

The LWV-VA’s 2019 Fall Workshop is the first event since the 2019 LWV-VA Convention approved a “scholarship fund” to assure that no member is left out because they cannot afford a registration fee for LWV-VA events.

For the Fall Workshop, LWV-VA granted two full scholarships and seven “fee assistance” scholarships. With the first implementation of the “scholarship” program, LWV-VA found several ways to improve the program so that more members could benefit.

The Board approved the amended policy at its meeting on Friday, September 13, 2019 (a lucky day for the scholarship program!) The policy can be found here: https://lwv-va.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Scholarship-Fund-Amended-Approved-by-Board-13-Sept-2019.pdf. The approved changes allow the LWV-VA treasurer to ask each applicant, “How much would you feel comfortable paying? You may say $0, that is acceptable.” By awarding partial scholarships or, more appropriately, by providing “fee assistance,” LWV-VA was able to stretch the original budget of $300.00 to a total of $610.00. Fee assistance amounts ranged from $25.00 to as much as $70.00, in addition to the two full scholarships of $95.00 each.

But it wasn’t only “fee assistance” that stretched the budget. Four LWV-VA Board members made donations to the scholarship fund totaling $310.00. We sincerely thank them for their generosity.

The next programs eligible for “Scholarship/Fee Assistance” are 1) the Pre-session Legislative Round Table scheduled for Wednesday, December 4, 2019 and 2) League Day, Wednesday, February 12, 2020. Pre-session and League Day are funded by the LWV-VA Education Fund; currently the budget for Ed Fund scholarships is $300.00, the same as was allotted to the program in the LWV-VA Operating Fund budget. This amount can be increased with your help. If you would like to donate to the LWV-VA Ed Fund Scholarship account, please donate on-line at https://lwv-va.org/donate/. Choose the “Donate (501c3) tax deductible” button; after selecting the
amount you wish to donate, click next, here you will be able to enter a “note” such as “Scholarship Fund” to indicate that’s how you want your donation used.

Note, that because the LWV-VA Council and Convention are business meetings with delegates voting and “observer” fees already provided, these two LWV-VA events are not eligible for “scholarship/fee assistance.’ The LWV-VA Board urges all local Leagues to budget to pay all or at least some of the registration fee for their members who will attend Council (June 2020) and/or the Convention (June 2021).

The LWV-VA Board is very pleased with the results of the first “Scholarship/Fee Assistance” program for the 2019 Fall Workshops. Deb Wake, LWV-VA president, said, “The Board has struggled with the need to increase registration fees due to the significant increase in hotel meeting room, food and beverage and Audio/Video charges. We are happy that the number of members attending LWV-VA events has been increasing steadily. However, that also means larger and more expensive venues are required. It warms our hearts that LWV-VA can offer scholarships and fee assistance for our very popular events.”

What is Your LWV-VA Program IQ?

Janet Gorn, Program Director, LWV-VA

Question: What is a “League Program?”

Answer: The League Program refers to the policy issues chosen and adopted for rigorous study, public discussion, action, and advocacy, at the local, state, and national levels. These are issues adopted as Policy Positions the League finds most timely and compelling.

Question: What are League Position Statements?

Answer: League statements on Program Policy Positions are the official adopted positions for each Program Area (Government Action, Natural Resources Action, and Social Policy). They reflect the Program Policy issues adopted by the most recent Convention.

Question: What is the Program Development Process?

Answer: The process by which Program Positions are adopted is through the Program Planning process, selecting of an issue, studying the issue, reaching consensus/concurrence, formulating a position, and adoption at the LWV-VA Biennial Convention.

Question: How many Program Policy Positions for Action has the LWV-VA adopted?

Answer: 20. A detailed list of Program Positions and background can be found in Positioned for Action: Complete LWV-VA Positions with History HERE:

- Government.............................................. 2
  - Delegation of Power Election Laws
  - Fiscal Policy
  - Reapportionment and Redistricting
  - Transportation
  - Women's Rights in Virginia Law
- Natural Resources.................................... 3
  - Air Quality
  - Extractive Industries: Hydraulic Fracturing
  - Land Use
  - Water Supply and Distribution
- Social Policy........................................................ 4
  - Adult Domestic Violence
  - Adult Justice
  - Child Care
  - Children at Risk
  - Education
  - Juvenile Justice
  - Behavioral Health
  - Offender Re-entry
  - Restoration of Civil Rights of Felons in Virginia

Question: What are the current 2019-2021 Program Policy Study issues?

Answer: At the 2019 Convention two issues were adopted for study: 1) Affordable Housing, and 2) Review of the LWV/VA Election Position.
Census Highlights from Workshops

Les Solomon, LWVSHR

“Shape your future—Start Here”

That is the mantra printed on water bottles and handbags given away by Ron Brown, a US Census Bureau official speaking at the Fall meeting, to promote the 2020 Census. His presentation was lively and the Q&A was engaging. He highlighted the importance of the Census, procedures, and challenges of conducting this 10-year event. He urged participation by local leagues as well as individuals.

The goal is to count “everyone once, only once, and in the right place.” This is so important because census data are used by the Federal government to help distribute more than $645 Billion over the 10-year period. Additionally, these data serve to fulfill the constitutional mandate to apportion congressional representatives among the states, to redistrict the Congress and state legislatures, and by civic organizations, businesses, and governmental entities to apply for grant applications. Brown also highlighted the importance of these data during natural disasters to locate and account for populations at risk.

Getting a complete and accurate census count is critically important. That's why responses are required by law. If a person does not respond online, by phone or through the mail, the U.S. Census Bureau will follow up in person. While participation is required by law, Brown emphasized that the Census Bureau is also required by law to protect these answers, meaning that the Census Bureau does not disclose any personal information.

Virginia has much to gain from an accurate count as well as much to lose if persons are missed. In the 2010 Census, Virginia’s response rate was only 73 percent. What does this mean for Virginia? For each person who is not counted in Virginia, potentially $2,000 would be lost in Federal funds, or $20,000 over the course of 10 years! Persons typically missed include children, youth aged 18-24, veterans, Non-English speakers, immigrants, those with disabilities, and seniors.

Brown urged participation in the census by applying for census jobs and joining complete count committees, working with schools, communities of faith, and business communities. Search on https://www.census.gov/partners/2020.html

*Note: See this LWVUS webpage for some information you might find useful: Get Out the Count: Mapping out a League Plan

One Billion Rising

Freeda Cathcart, LWVRVA

On February 10, 2019, the League of Women Voters of the Roanoke Valley joined other civic groups and non-profits to bring attention to violence against women by participating in the One Billion Rising Roanoke event. We encouraged people to register to vote. We also had information encouraging people to contact their members of Congress to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act and to contact their state representatives to support the Equal Rights Amendment.
This is the 6th year there has been a One Billion Rising event in Roanoke and the first year the new League of Women Voters of the Roanoke Valley participated in the event. Women gathered inside Valley View Mall to bring attention to the resources to help prevent violence against women and provided resources to help those experiencing violence. It was a great opportunity to educate the public about the new League and to recruit new members.

The event opened with the Break The Chain dance (view the video from the event by going to https://tinyurl.com/OBR2019Dance).

Yzavia Haney, a survivor, encouraged women who are experiencing violence to use the resources available to them. She spoke about how the first people she told didn't believe her, but she kept reaching out until she found people who believed her and helped her.

Freeda Cathcart, organizer and member of the LWVRV board, informed people about the global 2019 One Billion Rising Campaign from their website OneBillionRising.org: "We are living in a time of upheaval and transformation. Together we have been rising to free women (cisgender, transgender, and those who hold fluid identities that are subject to gender-based violence) from sexual and physical violence in its more overt and obvious forms: rape, battery, incest, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, sexual slavery and trafficking, child marriage, femicide, sexual-gender and reproductive oppression and violence towards LGBTQIA+ communities. And, we have had many victories. As we come into our 7th year of One Billion Rising, we are faced with bigger challenges. To end violence against women, we must commit ourselves to a deeper examination of violence in all its forms. Along with sexual and physical violence, we must also look at systemic violence in economic, political, socio-cultural, environmental and ideological spheres."

Leagues can go to OneBillionRising.org to find out how to join the movement that started because of the disturbing statistic that 1 in 3 women across the planet will be beaten or raped during her lifetime, that’s one billion women and girls.

Roanoke's Urban Renewal and Healing Systemic Racism

Freeda Cathcart, LWVRVA

On Thursday evening, August 22, around sixty people filled the Gainsboro library's meeting room to attend the League of Women Voters of the Roanoke Valley's program: Roanoke's Urban Renewal and Healing Systemic Racism.

Jordan Bell delivered an excellent presentation about how Roanoke's urban renewal projects destroyed black communities and businesses. He first described the prosperity and successes for the black Gainsboro neighborhood. Bell explained what Richard Chubb meant when he said Roanoke had "neon." Gainsboro had the bright neon lights of a successful city like New York and Philadelphia. A black person didn't have to leave Roanoke to find success or to attend a star-studded event.
Bell has spent countless hours listening to the elders describe how Gainsboro used to be before urban renewal. Roanoke didn't have only one urban renewal project like most other cities. Roanoke had several urban development projects over several decades. He defined systemic racism and illustrated how the government's projects targeted the prosperous black communities. The urban renewal projects cheated black families out of their homes that were already paid for and prevented them from passing on their hard-earned wealth to their families.

During the question and answer portion of the evening, Theresa Gill-Walker asked about gentrification and how developers were trying to pressure her and others to sell their homes in the Evans Spring neighborhood. Some of the families had previously moved out of Gainsboro due to an urban renewal project. Bell explained the difference between urban renewal (a government project) and gentrification (private developers' projects). The audience engaged in a discussion on how to protect Evans Springs and other communities from losing their wealth while protecting their neighborhoods.

Richard Chubb attended the program along with Council members Anita Price and Bill Bestpitch. Charles Price, from the Harrison Museum of African American Culture, also attended the event.

Linda Garvelink, League of Women Voters of Virginia Treasurer, drove down from northern Virginia to attend the event with her husband. Garvelink was excited to see the new LWV of the Roanoke Valley League taking the initiative to learn about Roanoke's past and their dedication to doing the work to eliminate systemic racism.

Freeda Cathcart, the Fundraising Chair and Nominating Committee member of the League of Women Voters of the Roanoke Valley (LWVRV), invited people to join the newly chartered organization. Cathcart told people about the League of Women Voters’ (LWV) commitment to being inclusive. LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy-makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

Yes Virginia, There is a “She Is Me” Effort in Virginia

To celebrate 100 years of League work and commemorate the inter-generational stories of Virginia’s League of Women Voters members. The League of Women Voters of Virginia is taking part in LWV-US’s “She Is Me” effort, an online campaign to generate awareness of the League among new audiences (referred to as “She Is Me” hereafter). With a focus on cultivating the next generation of LWV supporters, LWV-VA will share stories of our membership through social media, in particular, Instagram.

Instagram is an online photo-sharing application and social network platform that allows users to edit and upload photos and short videos through a mobile app. It allows LWV-VA to tell our story through images and video on a mobile platform. As more people engage in social media on their cell phones, it is essential that LWV-VA’s message and story be present on applications designed for cell
phones and other mobile devices. Thus the emphasis of LWV-VA’s She Is Me campaign on Instagram. If you have an Instagram account, please consider following LWV-VA, @lwv_va.

While LWV-VA is participating in She Is Me, it is not a mandate for local Leagues to do so. Leagues can engage in She Is Me by simply adding the #SheIsMeLWV and #YesVASheIsMeLWV hashtags, to an inspirational post on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Virginia members are encouraged to submit their League stories through LWV-VA’s She Is Me Google Survey, found at https://forms.gle/922Uxy6aEHT6prPe7 or by using this QR code:

![QR code image]

Additionally, you can nominate yourself and/or your fellow members to be highlighted in this effort. Please submit nominations to Andrianne Konstas at membership@lwv-va.org. All images and quotes shared in this effort will be branded with She Is Me graphics (She Is Me watermark on photos) and hashtags. She Is Me will be an ongoing campaign, starting in 2019 and running through the 2020 election.

The She Is Me campaign celebrates the diversity and perseverance of LWV members across generations, and bridges the gap between our 100-year legacy and the contemporary voices on the front line of our League’s advocacy efforts today. Let’s commemorate the advocacy efforts of Virginia’s Leagues on a platform that goes all over the world and into the next generations of the League.

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**Help Wanted**

**Development:** We are looking for someone to help with fundraising. If you have ideas and are willing to develop and implement plans for fundraising, we need you. This is an off-board position.

**Public Relations:** Do you have experience writing Press Releases and helping to develop information of Internet resources to increase our visibility? If so, we need you. This is an off-board position.

For those interested in helping with these jobs, please contact Deb Wake, President at email president@lwv-va.org. Do you have a skill you would like to share? Please let us know.

**Special Events: Two Women’s Summits and a Commemoration in October.**

Congressman Don Beyer is hosting a Women’s Conference and Forum on Saturday, October 12 at the George Mason Arlington Campus from 8:30am-noon. The event is free; information and registration can be found [here](#).

The Women’s Monument on Capitol Square in Richmond will be commemorated Monday, October 14 from 11am-12:30pm. The event is free; more information about the monument can be found [here](#).

Senator Mark Warner is hosting a Women’s Summit in Richmond at the Convention Center. There will be a cocktail reception the evening of October 14 followed by a full day of sessions October 15. The cost to attend is $25; information and registration can be found [here](#).

**Increase Your DEI Knowledge**

LWVUS provides several resources for understanding how to implement the best of DEI practices. [https://www.lwv.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion/dei-modules](https://www.lwv.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion/dei-modules)
DEI Module 1: The Whys and What of DEI

The purpose of this module is to offer a deeper understanding of what we mean by Diversity Equity and Inclusion and how it is connected to the work we are doing.

DEI Module 2: Applying a DEI Lens to Our League Work

The purpose of this module is to offer a deeper understanding of what a DEI lens is and how we can apply it to our work.

DEI Module 3: DEI Commitment and Goal Setting

The purpose of this module is to offer a deeper understanding of how to commit to DEI on a deeper level, use it to engage with your community and your League and how to set goals with a DEI lens.

DEI Module 4: Understanding and Partnering With Your Community - Part 1

The purpose of this module is to offer a deeper understanding of how to collect information to understand the diversity of your community, membership, and engagers.

DEI Module 5: Understanding and Partnering With Your Community - Part 2

The purpose of this module is to offer a deeper understanding of how to be equitable and inclusive in how we work in our communities and lead our organization.

UPCOMING EVENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 12</td>
<td>Women’s Summit, Saturday, George Mason, Arlington Campus 8:30am-12pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 13</td>
<td>LWV-VA Board Meeting Sunday, Richmond 1pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 14</td>
<td>Voices in the Garden Commemoration 11am-12:30pm Monday, Capitol Hill, Richmond</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>Women’s Summit, Richmond Convention Center Tuesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 15</td>
<td>Deadline to Register to Vote in the Nov. 5th Election</td>
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<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td>Deadline to vote absentee</td>
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<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>Election Day</td>
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<td>Nov. 10</td>
<td>LWVVA 99th Birthday</td>
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<td>Nov. 13</td>
<td>Board Meeting Wednesday--virtual 10am</td>
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<td>Nov. 18</td>
<td>General Assembly Special Session to hear recommendations from the Virginia State Crime Commission</td>
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<td>Nov. 18</td>
<td>Prefiling Begins</td>
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<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td>LWV-VA Board Meeting Tuesday, Richmond</td>
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<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td>Pre-Session, John Marshall Hotel, Richmond</td>
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Donate to the League at [https://lwv-va.org/donate/](https://lwv-va.org/donate/) or use this QR Code.