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Change is in the Air

Deb Wake, President, LWV-VA

Can you feel it? Women are taking their rightful place. On Monday, October 14, seven of the twelve statues comprising the Virginia Women’s Monument, “Voices in the Garden,” were unveiled on Capitol Hill in Richmond: Cockacoeske, Adèle Clark, Laura Copenhaver, Mary Draper Ingles, Elizabeth Keckly, Anne Burras Laydon, and Virginia Randolph. A week later, the statues of three women were approved for placement in Central Park, NYC:

Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth. All of these women impacted their communities, and society as a whole, but have not been immortalized in bronze until now. In fact, very few women exist as statues in public spaces unless they are allegories: liberty, virtue, hope, etc. The time to recognize real women who have made real impacts is woefully overdue.

Also woefully overdue is the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) which simply states: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on the account of sex.” We continue to work on getting the ERA passed in the Virginia General Assembly. How long must we wait? We fought for over 70 years for the 19th amendment which gave many women the right to vote—others had to wait for the Voting Rights Act in order to exercise their right to vote.

Last month, a women’s forum in Northern Virginia attracted one thousand women. Actress and activist Jane Fonda invited attendees to be arrested with her to draw attention to the environment. Another fourteen

Figure 1: League members gathered for the unveiling of Voices in the Garden
hundred women gathered in Richmond for a summit to celebrate achievements made by women. Hosted by Queen Latifah, the atmosphere was electric—pregnant with possibility, community-building, and where attendees supported and lifted each other up.

On December 4, our members will gather in Richmond for Pre-session where we will hear from our partners about their legislative priorities and where we will share the League’s priorities as well; priorities such as ratifying the ERA, passing common sense gun laws and redistricting legislation. Together, we can make lasting changes for ourselves, our families, our communities, and our world. Can you feel it?

Are You Election Ready?

Tuesday, November 5, 2019, Virginia Voters go to the polls and cast our votes as we elect all 100 of our State Delegates and all 40 of our State Senators.

How can you find out what is on your ballot and learn about the candidates from a non-partisan source? The League of Women Voters provides you with this information through Vote411.org. You can also check the location of your Polling place since some of these around the state have changed.

For all your election needs, covering candidate information and important dates

VOTE 411

ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED

How you can help:
If your candidate has not responded, please contact them and let them know that this site is important to you!

99th Birthday of LWV-VA

From the Education Library of Virginia

Last accessed: 10/28/2019

ORGANIZATION OF THE VIRGINIA LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, NOVEMBER 10, 1920

“The League of Women Voters (LWV) has fought since 1920 to improve public policy through education and advocacy. The league is a grassroots organization that works at the local, state, and national level. Today there are about 900 state and local leagues, all of which can be easily mobilized. The focus of the league changes as society does, providing support and information during debates on public policy. Carrie Chapman Catt founded the LWV in 1920, six months prior to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Catt’s goal was the creation of a “league of women voters to finish the fight and aid in the reconstruction of the nation.”

The Virginia League of Women Voters (VLUW) was organized to succeed the Equal Suffrage League (ESL), which was founded in 1909 in Richmond. The ESL became one of the most influential suffrage organizations in the country. The ESL sought to educate Virginia’s citizens and legislators and win their support for woman suffrage. The ESL argued that women were taxpayers and had special interests that were poorly represented within government. Shortly after the national victory for woman suffrage in 1920, the ESL disbanded and the VLUW quickly formed and began work to make the new electorate an informed one. The ESL held its last meeting on November 8, 1920, and reorganized at the Capitol two days later as the VLUW.

The VLUW immediately initiated a number of programs and activities, including voter registration drives and education programs, and lobbying efforts for a number of social welfare causes. As a result of their efforts, by October 1920, more than 13,000 Richmond women, including 10,645 white women and 2,410 black women, had registered to vote in the November presidential election. Many women devoted their lives to educating other women on the importance of their vote. In 1927 Naomi Cohn spoke before the League of Women Voters and stated, “The work is just begun, and must be kept up so that the voters of the state shall become educated to that duty
of casting their votes . . . and that they will send, to represent them in the legislature, only liberal progressive citizens.” Although the Virginia General Assembly failed to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment the VLWV saw the necessity in continuing to educate the public on political issues so that women could make informed decisions when headed to the polls.

Links
- "Women Suffrage in Virginia" In Encyclopedia Virginia, published by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities
- League of Women Voters of Virginia: History of the League
- This Day in Virginia: November 10

Suggested Reading

Pre-session is Almost Here
Joan Porte, First VP, LWV-VA

The 2020 session of the Virginia General Assembly begins January 8 and promises to be dynamic. It is no exaggeration to say the eyes of the Nation will be upon us as lawmakers decide issues such as the passage of the ERA, anti-gerrymandering redistricting reform, voting rights protections, and gun violence prevention, to name a few.

At our Pre-Session forum you will learn how our partner organizations’ legislative priorities tie in with ours and how we can work together to achieve success. There is no better way to get ready for action this winter and be prepared to make sure the General Assembly hears the voice of the League of Women Voters of Virginia!

We hope to see you at the John Marshall Ballroom in Richmond on December 4, 2019 for Pre-Session. We will begin with a continental breakfast at 9:00am. This year we will have two options for your attendance. You can attend the morning session, including a continental breakfast, for $20. However, $50 will cover the entire 9am-3pm event: continental breakfast, presentations from our partners, a plated lunch and our lunch speakers.

If you need “fee assistance” in order to attend this fantastic event, please contact treasurer@lwv-va.org to check if funds are available.

Please RSVP by November 27:
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pre-session-tickets-77142534397

See you at Pre-Session

Celebrating Virginia Women & Virginia League of Women Voters First President
Mary Crutchfield, Second VP, LWV-VA

On October 14, 2019 League members from across the state attended the dedication ceremony and unveiling of seven statues at the “Voices in the Garden” Virginia Women’s Monument located on the Capitol grounds. There were speeches made by former First Lady Susan Allen, Governor Northam, former Senator Mary Margaret Whipple, Senator Ryan T. McDougle, Senate Clerk Susan Carke Schaar,
Professor of Leadership Studies at University of Richmond Dr. Lauranett Lee, the Director of Studio EIS Ivan Schwartz, and First Lady Pamela Northam. Senator Mary Margaret Whipple, Vice Chair of the Virginia Women’s Monument Commission, said in her speech that they picked women both famous and obscure that made important contributions to Virginia. They also decided that the statues should be placed on the ground, not on pedestals, to show that “they did real things in this commonwealth.” Governor Northam said that this monument is a “long overdue addition to Capitol Square.” He said that only 10% of all statues in this country are of women. Ivan Schwartz, Director of Studio EIS in Brooklyn, N.Y. where the statues were sculpted, said in his research that as of 2011, only 394 out of 5200 public statues of historical figures in the U.S. were of women. He said, “Our public spaces have finally started to admit women, African Americans, and Native Americans.”

After First Lady Pamela Northam offered some remarks, she welcomed girl scouts from two councils who took the covers off of each statue as she called out their names. The statues unveiled were: Cockacoeske, Anne Burras Laydon, Elizabeth Hobbs Keckli, Mary Draper Ingles, Laura Lu Copenhaver, Virginia Estelle Randolph, and Adèle Clark. Adèle Clark was an artist and a women’s suffrage activist who, with a group of eighteen other women, founded the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia in 1909 in Richmond. They had meetings at the Crenshaw House on Franklin Street which is now part of Virginia Commonwealth University. Adèle and her partner Nora Houston, who was also an artist, would set up their easels on a street corner in downtown Richmond and when people stopped to watch they would talk to them about women’s suffrage and hand out flyers. Adèle and Nora opened a studio together “The Atelier” and then later founded the Virginia Academy of Fine Arts and Handicrafts. Before the 1920 elections, when there were threats towards black women voters, they worked with black leaders on ways to deal with this issue. They organized white suffragists to patrol the polling places in their cars. When the 19th Amendment was passed giving women the right to vote in 1920 the Equal Suffrage League became the League of Women Voters of Virginia. Adèle Clark became the first chair and then became president the following year. She served as president from 1921 to 1925 and then from 1929 to 1944, a total of 20 years.

**Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Ground-breaking November 14th**

You are cordially invited to attend the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Ground-breaking -- which has
been 12 years in the making! On November 14, 2019 construction will begin on our country’s sole, national memorial that will honor and commemorate all of the millions of suffragists who fought for more than seven decades to win the vote for American women. November 14, 2019 is the 102nd anniversary of the Night of Terror, a major turning point in the suffrage movement that took place on these hallowed, prison grounds.

An informative program will begin at 10 a.m. at Occoquan Regional Park, 9751 Ox Rd., Lorton, VA 22079. There will be light refreshments, photo opportunities and joyous fellowship as we celebrate the beginning of the end of our collective journey to properly recognize these amazing women and tell their unparalleled story. Ample parking is available on the premises. Please register for this free event by November 8: [https://www.eventbrite.com/e/turning-point-suffragist-memorial-groundbreaking-ceremony-tickets-73700763969](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/turning-point-suffragist-memorial-groundbreaking-ceremony-tickets-73700763969)

### General Assembly Update

**Julia Tanner,** Action Coordinator, LWV-VA

This summer, Virginia's gun violence bills were sent to the Virginia State Crime Commission (VSCC) for review. The VSCC has announced it will hold meetings open to the public on Nov. 12 and Dec. 11. The Commission does not adopt or vote down bills; it conducts studies and makes recommendations. Accordingly, the bills will not be voted on during these meetings.

The meetings will start at 10:00 AM. Consider arriving at least half an hour in advance, should you wish to attend. Both meetings will be held in the Pocahontas Building, 900 East Main Street, Richmond.

- Tues, Nov 12: House Committee Room. Topics: mass killings and gun violence.
- Wed, Dec 11: Shared Committee Room (Committee Room B). Topics: Virginia pre-trial data project, state report on fingerprinting, legislative package, and outstanding requests.


What you can do: inform your state Delegate and state Senator about LWV positions and ask what they will do to prevent gun violence.

To find your lawmaker's contact info, enter your address at [whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov](http://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov). Then report your advocacy [here](http://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov), to help your local League win the League of Women Voters of Virginia Advocacy Challenge!

The General Assembly will reconvene on Nov. 18, 2019 for a lame duck session.


### Facebook News

**Carolyn Caywood,** Facebook Coordinator, LWV-VA

We’re making some changes to the LWV-VA Facebook Groups. A while back we opened [LWV-VA Voting & Elections](http://facebook.com/groups/LWVVA-Votin) to the public. So far that’s worked out well. Our members are politically diverse, so it is good that we are nonpartisan! We half-opened [LWV-VA Centennial Group](http://facebook.com/groups/LWVVA-Centennial) in that people don’t have to be in Virginia or League members to join. And that too has worked.

So now we are going to apply the LWV-VA
**Centennial Group** model to more groups. They are:

- LWV-VA Climate Change
- LWV-VA Education
- LWV-VA Fracking, Uranium, and other Extractive Industries
- LWV-VA Health Care
- LWV-VA Immigration
- LWV-VA Redistricting Group
- LWV-VA Transportation
- LWV-VA Women’s Rights & the VA Code

If you are a member of one of these groups, you will be able to add members yourself. (Please make certain someone wants to be added first!) We’ll link these groups from the LWV-VA Facebook Page so their existence, but not people’s posts, will be visible. All of this will, we hope, spark livelier discussions and more use of the pages. But that depends on you – post what you want to discuss.

The full list of LWV-VA Facebook Groups is at [https://lwv-va.org/members-corner/facebook-working-groups/](https://lwv-va.org/members-corner/facebook-working-groups/)

**Help Wanted**

Do you love planning events? Please join our Event Planning Committee. Contact [president@lwv-va.org](mailto:president@lwv-va.org) if interested.

**First Call: 2020 LWVUS Convention**

**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS’ 54TH NATIONAL CONVENTION**

**HYATT REGENCY CAPITOL HILL & LIAISON WASHINGTON CAPITOL HILL**

**JUNE 25 - JUNE 28, 2020**

We invite our League members to save these dates and plan to join fellow passionate and engaged League leaders for our biennial national gathering to be held in Washington, DC in 2020.

**Grant Opportunity**

The League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) is pleased to announce a 2020 Youth Voter Registration project. As part of this project, LWVEF will award pass-through grants to state and local Leagues to undertake voter registration activities in high schools, community colleges, and alternative/vocational schools in underrepresented communities. **Grant applications are due by midnight December 13, 2019** and grant decisions will be announced before the holidays. Grants will only be considered for Leagues targeting at least 5 schools during the spring timeframe of 2020. Leagues must agree to undertake activities in a nonpartisan fashion and must also agree to collect contact information from registrants in order to conduct Get-out-the-Vote follow-up. See the application for additional information.

**Affordable Housing Study**

Alice Tousignant, LWVRMA

The LWV-VA is undertaking a two-year Affordable Housing Study to culminate in a position on the issue to be presented at the LWV-VA Convention in 2021. To that end, an Affordable Housing Study Committee, chaired by Alice Tousignant from the Richmond League, has been formed with representatives from most local Leagues across Virginia. The Study will be focused on affordable housing for people at 50% of Area Median Income and below, primarily renters. In order to promote maximum involvement from League members around the State, the LWV-VA has created a webpage for relevant research, studies and Committee reports designed to inform and educate League members about affordable housing in Virginia. Local Leagues may use this information for educating members and the public about affordable housing and for initiating discussions about affordable housing needs in their localities. For more information or for questions, please contact Alice Tousignant at [alice@hdadvisors.net](mailto:alice@hdadvisors.net).
In June, the Supreme Court (SCOTUS) ruled that partisan gerrymandering is okay. This terrible ruling means that political parties can draw district lines in order to favor the party in control. VOTERS should determine where the lines are drawn—not the politicians who benefit from where the lines are drawn.

The League of Women Voter’s response is People Powered Fair Maps, a 50-state Redistricting Campaign. SCOTUS made it clear that the solution to gerrymandering must occur at the state level or through congressional action at the federal level. We have a couple of options available to us in Virginia:

1. The general assembly passed a constitutional amendment in the 2019 regular session. Jackie Rivas, co-chair of the LWV-VA Redistricting Issue Committee, laid this out in the October Voter. The exact same constitutional amendment must be passed by legislators in the 2020 session.

2. Accompanying legislation must be passed during the 2020 session. This legislation lays out criteria such as transparency, anti-gerrymandering language, rules for drawing lines (such as geographic contiguity and respect for city/county boundaries, preservation of communities of interest, compactness/competitiveness) and specific directions for how commission members are selected.

3. Once the constitutional amendment passes a second time, voters will have an opportunity to vote on it at the polls next November.

4. In 2013, the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was gutted in the Shelby v. Holder decision. Chief Justice Roberts declared in the 5-4 decision that discrimination does not exist at the same level as in 1965 when the VRA was first passed. However, within 24 hours of the SCOTUS decision, states began enacting laws that discriminated against certain voters and suppressed their votes. The VRA assured that election laws passed by states with a history of voter-suppression/discrimination had to be “pre-cleared” by the US Department of Justice (DOJ). Without pre-clearance, nonprofit organizations, like the League of Women Voters, have had to file suits on behalf of voters. The suits cost hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars and 3-5 years to litigate. In addition, states that did not have a history of voter-suppression and were not under pre-clearance, have begun to pass discriminatory laws. In the meanwhile, voters have been disenfranchised—and there is no remedy for the loss of opportunity—there is no “re-vote” for voters. The solution is to pass HR4 in the US House of Representatives (the bill passed the House Judicial Committee October 23). HR4 introduces new formulas for pre-clearance that would allow states to “roll off” for “good behavior” or be added for “bad behavior.” S. 561 is the senate companion bill. There is a separate bill for Native American Voting Rights, S.739, which LWV also supports.

Good design can engage the intellect, celebrate the past, and light a path forward. As the League of Women Voters of Virginia approaches its 99th anniversary, the Equal Rights Amendment committee launched an ERA Button Contest in appreciation of the art and symbols that weave history into memory.

The League of Women Voters supports ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and many League members are working to achieve this Constitutional guarantee. Richmond League member Pat Fishback is among those who have advocated for the ERA from the 1970s to the present. Pat testified to lawmakers in the Virginia General Assembly as recently as 2018 and spoke on a panel at the Arlington Civic Federation prior to that body's adoption of supportive resolutions.

In search of a design that would connect League ERA efforts from the past through the present, the committee distributed a flyer seeking lapel button entries. Three judges volunteered: Deb Wake, president of the League of Women Voters of Virginia;
Donna St. Clair, member of the League's ERA Committee, and Alana McBride, president and founder of the League of Women Voters Club at Washington-Liberty High School in Arlington.

Thankful for the creative entrants, who showed talent to spare, the judges considered all entries with care. They made their selections using ranked choice voting and settled upon the winning entry. It communicates clearly and quickly the goal of ERA ratification, in the traditional colors of the ERA movement. We are pleased to announce that artist Sue Gubisch has won the contest, with a design that will be unveiled November 15 at an evening event in Arlington to commemorate and raise funds to continue the fine legacy of the League.

If you are interested in the event, please email actioncoordinator@lwv-va.org. We are also seeking interest in a committee to plan the event.

Congratulations to Sue, and warm thanks to all of the entrants, whose time and skill made for a very challenging decision.