Deb Wake, President LWV-VA

The Importance of a Nonpartisan Voice

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. We accept that, we recite it, we include it on press releases and letterheads. Why is that? Is being nonpartisan so important? Why?

The biggest reason that LWV is nonpartisan is because we focus on policy. We support issues like voting rights-- year in, year out, all year, every year. Our focus 100 years ago was seeing that women got the right to vote. We continue to fight for every citizen’s right to vote. We also work to register voters so they can exercise that right. Because we are nonpartisan, we’re trusted to work with our newest voters--whether they’re high schoolers or whether they’re new citizens. Our goal is to provide them with the tools they need to become registered, to become informed and to become voters.

We support voter education--how do elections work? What’s on the ballot? What candidates are running and how do they compare on the issues important to voters? We let the candidates speak for themselves and let voters decide who will best represent them.

We support laws that protect those who are under-represented or vulnerable--often, these are women and families. We support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and laws that protect Virginians from gun violence. We seek improvements where we live: broadband service in rural areas, mass transit in urban areas, and clean air and water no matter where you live in Virginia.

On Wednesday, December 4, we will once again hold our Legislative Pre-session where we have the opportunity to hear from our partner organizations about their priorities and what issues we can partner on and advocate for. We look forward to continuing to work on issues that impact voting and quality of life for all Virginians. Together we can make real change.
We hope to see you at the WLRT Pre-session on December 4th! Please be sure to get your Tickets by Monday, December 2 at noon so that appropriate plans can be made for refreshments and materials.

Election Security Standards Adopted

Lisa Koteen Gerchick
Co-chair Election Laws Study Committee

The State Board of Elections on November 18 adopted new, rigorous cybersecurity standards to protect voter information in Virginia’s elections database. If local elections officials fail to file annual compliance reports showing their locality meets the new standards, their systems are denied access to the State elections systems. The new, up-to-date cybersecurity standards were mandated by HB2178, a bill sponsored by Del. Mark Sickles and passed by the General Assembly in 2019.

A Historic League Day is Coming!

Celebrate the “Yesterdays and Tomorrows” of the League of Women Voters

Joan Porte, 1st VP LWV-VA

League Day is always a wonderful opportunity to visit members of the General Assembly and discuss our many positions and legislative goals. This year, our League Day, February 12, 2020, will also be a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the League of Women Voters! We have so many wonderful events from which you can choose but we hope you stay for them all. This will be a great opportunity to be present at a historical moment in our history.

Our schedule starts on Feb 12 at 8 AM for an extended version of the Women’s Legislative Round Table held in the Auditorium of the Sun Trust Building at 919 East Main Street, Richmond. A breakfast of fruit and pastries will be available.

Our legislative team will have information and handouts to arm you with before you head off to visit your legislators. You do need to make appointments in advance and it’s okay to meet with staff. It is best to schedule visits between 10:15 AM and 12:30 PM.

If you’re interested in taking part in the official recognition of the League of Women Voters’ 100th birthday, you should line up to enter the gallery by 11 AM. We will be recognized from the floors of both chambers.

At 1 PM our Anniversary Luncheon at the Delta Marriott Hotel ballroom begins. Our speaker will be award-winning journalist and author A’Lelia Bundles, great, great-granddaughter of Madame C.J. Walker whose parents and older siblings were slaves but who died as the first female self-made millionaire. We will share memories of our past and goals for our future with some surprises along the way!

The luncheon is $65. We do have scholarships available if needed. Please contact the treasurer at treasurer@lwv-va.org.

Hopefully, you can stay overnight because on February 13, we have more activities planned. In the morning you can either visit the legislators you missed the day before or take a tour of Maggie L Walker’s home at 600 North Second Street. Maggie Walker was the first African American woman to charter a bank and serve as its president in the
United States. We have a free tour set up at 9:30 AM for anyone interested.

Then it is off to the Historic Tredegar Civil War Museum, 500 Tredegar Street, Richmond for lunch, presentation on the life of Civil War Women and a tour from 1 PM to 3 PM. The lunch, presentation, and tour is $35 per person.

We have a block of sleeping rooms based on first-come-first served at the Delta Marriott, $147 plus tax for single or double. For information and to book contact me at events@lwv-va.org.

The link to RSVP for any or all of these wonderful events is https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-league-of-women-voters-100th-anniversary-luncheon-tickets-78690662891

None of us were there for our founding in 1920 but we can be present for this historic and fun celebration of this fantastic milestone! This is our chance to let future Leaguers know that we are strong, active, and growing one hundred years later.

See you in Richmond!

Gun Safety Update

Ruth Hoffman, LWVFA Co-Chair LWV-VA Firearms Safety Task Force

Nearly 40 percent of voters statewide cast ballots in this year’s General Assembly elections, up from 29 percent from 2015. Gun safety was the top voting issue going into the election according to a Washington Post-Schar School poll. The abrupt adjournment of the special session on gun legislation this summer elevated the issue just months before the election. The Virginia State Crime Commission had been directed to review the events that occurred in Virginia Beach and propose legislative changes to Virginia’s laws concerning firearms and public safety. Further, the Crime Commission was asked to issue a report following a “thoughtful and deliberative approach” to study evidence, data and research and make recommendations. The Crime Commission was expected to reconvene on November 12 to consider recommendations. However, Senator Mark Obenshain, in a statement issued on November 8, cancelled the Crime Commission meeting. The Crime Commission issued a three page report on November 12 and made no recommendations. It stated in part that “It was determined that inconclusive evidence exists to develop recommendations… the absence of recommendations should not be interpreted as a finding that no changes to Virginia’s laws are necessary. Any changes to these laws are policy decisions which can only be made by the General Assembly.”

While no one law will prevent every death or injury by a firearm, passage of meaningful gun violence prevention laws in the next General Assembly, like background checks and extreme risk protection orders, will help to make our communities safer. It will not only make a difference for families and communities in Virginia, but it will have profound benefits in other states because Virginia has been ranked among the leading states for exporting crime guns into other states.

Recent media outlets quoting Governor Northam’s spokesperson suggests that gun violence legislation will be among their first order of work. “Virginians are demanding real action to combat gun violence and save lives — that’s what they’ll get on day one of this new legislature.” Governor signals GVP as priority

The list of policies the Governor announced in January 2019 and also in July’s Special Session are likely to be among the top gun violence prevention priorities. Below are the eight priorities from July which expanded upon the January list by enabling localities to enact ordinances and by expanding the list of dangerous weapons subject to a ban.
- Legislation requiring background checks on all firearms sales and transactions. The bill mandates that any person selling, renting, trading, or transferring a firearm must first obtain the results of a background check before completing the transaction.
- Legislation banning dangerous weapons. This will include bans on assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, bump stocks and silencers.
- Legislation to reinstate Virginia’s successful law allowing only one handgun purchase within a 30-day period.
- Legislation requiring that lost and stolen firearms be reported to law enforcement within 24 hours.
- Legislation creating an Extreme Risk Protective Order, allowing law enforcement and the courts to temporarily separate a person from firearms if the person exhibits dangerous behavior that presents an immediate threat to self or others.
- Legislation prohibiting all individuals subject to final protective orders from possessing firearms. The bill expands Virginia law which currently prohibits individuals subject to final protective orders of family abuse from possessing firearms.
- Legislation enhancing the punishment for allowing access to a loaded, unsecured firearm by a child from a Class 3 Misdemeanor to a Class 6 felony. The bill also raises the age of the child from 14 to 18.
- Legislation enabling localities to enact any firearms ordinances that are stricter than state law. This includes regulating firearms in municipal buildings, libraries and at permitted events.

The following provides additional detail on a few of the likely forthcoming policies:

**Background Checks:** The single most effective thing we can do to keep guns out of dangerous hands and reduce the number of Americans killed with guns every day is requiring criminal background checks on all sales to close the loophole that allows felons, domestic abusers and the dangerously mentally ill to buy guns. Background checks are a sensible reform that Americans overwhelmingly agree on – polls consistently show that 90 percent of the country – including 82 percent of gun owners and 74 percent of NRA members – supports criminal background checks on all gun sales. Background checks are quick and easy – they take about 90 seconds to complete. The problem is that loopholes in our gun laws allow unlicensed sellers to sell guns online and at gun shows without running a background check. This loophole is called the “private sale” loophole. That means criminals and other dangerous people can flood the market for firearms on sites like Armslist.com – and they frequently do.

**Extreme Risk Protective Order “ERPO” (aka “Red Flag” laws):** Many mass shootings have something in common, family members, friends, school officials or law enforcement noticed warning signs that the shooters exhibited violent behavior. Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO), generically known as “Red Flag” laws, empower families or law enforcement to remove a person’s access to firearms before they commit violence. Red flag laws are seeing growing bipartisan support with both Republican and Democratic governors taking action. This year many states passed legislation bringing the total to 17 states and DC. On December 18, 2018, President Trump’s Commission on School Safety endorsed ERPOs by stating “The Commission endorses Extreme Risk Protection Order laws, which give authorities a temporary way to keep those who threaten society from possessing or purchasing firearms.” **White House School Safety Commission.**
The first Extreme Risk Law was enacted into law after the deadly shooting on the University of California, Santa Barbara campus in 2014. The shooter had exhibited dangerous behaviors prior to the shooting, and his parents shared their concerns with his therapist who contacted law enforcement. The police briefly interviewed him but had no legal authority to intervene. An extreme risk law provides a legal process to prevent tragedies from occurring. Red flag laws vary by state, but they generally allow law enforcement or family to petition a judge to temporarily restrict a person’s access to firearms. The judge can issue an emergency, temporary order – without the gun owner being present – to prevent immediate danger. But a full hearing must be scheduled promptly, offering the gun owner the ability to respond. A longer order can be issued during the full hearing if there is evidence that the person is dangerous.

**Child Access Prevention (CAP):** Easy access to unsecured firearms is a deciding factor in a majority of unintentional child gun deaths. These tragedies are entirely preventable but many states have yet to adopt policies that would make it harder for children to access negligently stored firearms. Moreover, there is a nexus to school shootings. Studies show 80 percent come from the home. There are no child access prevention laws at the Federal level. Virginia has a CAP law but is considered to be among the weakest. From 2007 to 2016, 318 children ages 0-17 died from gun violence in Virginia. Forty-nine percent of child gun deaths were homicides, 41% were suicide and 10% were unintentional deaths (n=31).

Legislation may be introduced to strengthen Virginia’s law to protect children and communities by providing that any person who leaves a loaded, unsecured firearm in such a manner as to endanger the life or limb of any child under the age of 14 is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor.

**Support Reporting Lost and stolen guns:** Individual gun owners are not required by federal law to report their lost and stolen guns to law enforcement. Researchers from Harvard University and Northeastern University estimate 380,000 guns are stolen in the US each year yet only 240,000 gun thefts were reported to the FBI in 2016. This means that in 2016, approximately 37% of lost or stolen guns in the US were never reported to law enforcement. Stolen guns often make their way to the illegal gun market and become “crime guns.” Lost and stolen reporting laws help solve this problem by requiring individuals who own a firearm that is lost or stolen to report the incident to law enforcement within 24 hours of discovering the loss or theft. This increases private gun seller accountability. For example, if a gun seller sells a gun to a prohibited person and that gun ends up at a crime scene, the seller cannot hide their involvement in the illegal gun sale by using the excuse “my gun must have been stolen”. According to the ATF, in 2016, more than 9,000 guns purchased in Virginia were later recovered in crime scenes or suspected of use in crimes; 41% of these guns were recovered in states other than Virginia. [https://www.atf.gov/docs/undefined/2016tracestatsvirginiapdf/download](https://www.atf.gov/docs/undefined/2016tracestatsvirginiapdf/download) Legislation may be introduced to help law enforcement solve crimes, prevent straw purchases, and reduce illegal gun trafficking.

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**Suffragist Memorial Groundbreaking**

Nancy Sargeant & Lois Page
LWVFA

**Suffragist Memorial Groundbreaking**

The ground has been broken for the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial, a national memorial that pays tribute to the millions of people who fought for women to have the vote. Colleen Shogan, the vice-chair of the U.S.- Congress-appointed...
Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, says this memorial will allow us to "come closer to rectifying the fact that fewer than 8% of all memorials in this country honor women." The groundbreaking begins the countdown to the memorial's dedication on August 26, 2020, the 100th anniversary of the certification of the 19th Amendment. The National Women's History Alliance has selected the dedication as the National Suffrage Centennial Event of the Year.

The date of the groundbreaking at Virginia's Occoquan Regional Park, November 14, was selected to coincide with the 102nd anniversary of the Night of Terror, when suffragists, who were illegally arrested after picketing the White House, were incarcerated, abused, and tortured on the nearby Occoquan Workhouse prison grounds. When journalists of the day learned of the atrocity, it became a major turning point in the suffrage movement.

When asked at the groundbreaking what she views as the significance of the memorial, Dr. Thelma Daley, past president of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority stated, "This memorial deals with the right to vote, which we were deprived of for so long. Many African American women were involved in the suffragist movement but did not receive a lot of credit. As I stand here today, we honor the 22 founders of Delta Sigma Theta who participated in the suffrage movement, beginning with the march on Washington in 1913."

Virginia Kase, CEO, League of Women Voters U.S., says the suffragists fought "so that we could become our great-grandmothers' wildest dreams." But she added "the fight is not over. The next 100 years are important too so that everyone's voice is heard."

It's taken more than a decade of work by the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Association and its Executive Director, Pat Wirth, to build the estimated $2 million memorial. Wirth says fundraising efforts are still underway so the nonprofit organization and partners can "build a memorial deserving of these women." Board Chair Nancy Sargeant says the memorial "will finally bring the stories of the suffragists out of the darkness and into the light" and board member John Houser says the suffragists are patriots who should be recognized. An added benefit, according to Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chair Sharon Bulova, is that the memorial "will contribute to the growing industry of history tourism in the county."

A broad history of the 72-year suffrage movement will be told through 19 informational stations within the memorial, representing the 19th Amendment. Also included in the design by architect Robert Beach is a bridge that Lidia Soto-Harmon, the CEO of the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital, hopes will be used by Girl Scouts in traditional bridging ceremonies so that "they will remember the important contribution of
the suffragists." The memorial will be open to the public following the dedication on August 26, 2020.

Be a Part of Making Democracy Work!

This Giving Tuesday, think of your Virginia League and the important work done for voter registration and education. Your donation helps us to keep our efforts growing. Click the image below to make your tax-deductible donation.

From LWV-US

Webinar Announcement Lobbying Tips and Tricks for State and Local Leagues

Join the Policy and Advocacy team for a webinar on lobbying tips and tricks. This webinar is intended to provide direction on setting up meetings, talking to legislators, leading a "hill day," and incorporating activists, new members, and coalition partners into the fold. The webinar is on Thursday, December 12, 2019, from 3 to 4pm ET. Register now.

Countdown to Convention 2020

Join us for our 54th Convention in June 2020! Convention will be hosted in Washington, DC, June 25-28. The first call with more information is on the League Management Site. Registration will be open by January, and in the coming weeks we will be posting the following on the League Management Site:

- Hotel reservation links for the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill and Liaison Washington Capitol Hill Hotel. We have secured room blocks at both hotels at a rate of $199/night.
- Caucus Application Form. We have a limited number of rooms reserved for state and local Leagues to host caucuses.
- Hardship Designation Request Form. Use if your League is unable to fulfill PMP requirements due to serious financial hardship.
- Wares Market Application Form. We will have a limited amount of space for Leagues to reserve a table to sell League related merchandise.
- Process to Propose Bylaws Amendments.

2020 Women’s March

2020 marks the 4th anniversary of Women's March, and the League of Women Voters is proud to continue our partnership. Just announced on the morning of November 23, 2019, the march will take place Saturday, January 18, 2020. There will be a main march in Washington, DC, with sister marches planned around the country. As in past years, we encourage Leagues to determine for themselves whether it makes sense for them to participate at the local and state level.

United Nations Notes

These are published, in full, on the LWV-VA blog. You can choose to receive notifications of new blog articles on these pages.

Quick Summary: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

The International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
(ICPMW) accords basic human rights to all migrants, without distinction of any kind and throughout the entire migration process. The family unit is protected under this law. Although the USA has not ratified this UN Convention, the League has a well articulated public policy on immigration that addresses the human rights of migrant workers and their families, as well as other non-worker migrants or refugees. Read more at is.gd/2UEBfh

**Quick Summary: International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICPMW)**

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) affirms that the existence of racial barriers is repugnant to the principles of human dignity and equality. It condemns any doctrine of superiority based on race as scientifically false, morally reprehensible and capable of disturbing peace and security throughout the world. The USA gave a qualified ratification to ICERD. The League's overarching Social Policy Position is to "Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all." Read more at is.gd/W8W6oM

**International Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Racial Discrimination**

Today's review of the International Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) is the next in a series of reviews of United Nations human rights conventions and treaties. The reviews are written by a group 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. Read more at is.gd/ekWm1a

**ERA Button Contest Winner**

Julia Tanner, Advocacy Chair, LWV-VA

The Equal Rights Amendment button design commemorating the 99th anniversary of the League of Women Voters’ of Virginia was officially launched on November 15. The button contest winning artist, Sue Gubisch, described her design elements as follows:

My button design utilizes the traditional colors of the women’s suffrage movement. I purposely punched up the gold to capture the urgency of today. I chose a font that has solid slab serifs, symbolizing the foundation and strength of women from the past upon which we build. The letter “R” had a curve to it that inspired me to turn it into a beautiful wave reminiscent of the suffrage sash. For me, the wave element also symbolizes movement, and the journey to equality.

The Equal Rights Amendment was drafted by Alice Paul and first introduced in 1923 in order to safeguard rights hard-won through the movement for women's suffrage. With November marking the 99th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters of Virginia, this is a fitting time to remember our beginnings as we look toward ratification of the
ERA and the next century of empowering voters and defending democracy.

Limited quantities of the League's commemorative ERA button will be on sale at the Pre-session Legislative Roundtable in Richmond on December 4th.

**Topsy-turvy: November 5, 2019 Election**

Carol Noggle, LWV-VA

**A New Majority in the Virginia House and Senate: now what?**

The 2019 election will create significant changes in the Virginia General Assembly. Meetings to determine the new leadership positions for the 2020 General Assembly Session have started with almost daily news reports. Some leadership changes are historic such as the first-ever woman to serve as the Speaker of the House. Predictions and speculation about changes to committee chairs occurred rapidly the day after the election when it was apparent that the majority in the House and Senate would be members of the Democratic Party for the first time in many years.

The ratio of R to D membership on House committees and subcommittees will be far closer in comparison to 2019 possibly creating a different level of debate.

The new majority in the House is 55 (D) to 45 (R); in the Senate: 21 (D) to 19 (R).

Not surprising, the new Democratic majority members are quickly filing bills on issue priorities that have languished each year under a Republican majority General Assembly. It is a fast-moving process that is advanced daily. As bills are filed daily (over 100 as of November 21st) the public can see them on the General Assembly website Legislative Information Services website. https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+lst+ALL

Changes in management and staff in the GA might also occur, such as the Clerk of the House and the Clerk of the Senate as the legislator-leaders choose high-level General Assembly administrators.

The “climate” of the Capitol Building may feel different with these historic changes.

Legislator-membership in some commissions, such as the Virginia State Crime Commission, may change soon also because the Speaker of the House makes those appointments.

Anyone who really wants to dig deep into an analysis of every district’s results, every race, which incumbents lost or won and by what percentage, and multiple analyses using colorful visuals will find an abundance at the VPAP website https://www.vpap.org/electionresults/2019

Certainly legislators will be seeking input and support from constituents and advocates so this is the time to set up meetings with your own legislators.

**Upcoming Events**

- Dec. 3rd: LWV-VA Board Meeting
- Dec. 4th: WLRT Pre-session
- Dec. 10th: Human Rights Day
- Dec. 12th: International Universal Health Coverage Day
- Jan. 7th LWV-VA Board Meeting
- Jan. 8th: Pre-filing of Bills for Legislative Session Ends at 10AM
- Jan. 15th: Weekly WLRT Meetings Begin
- Jan. 22: WLRT Meeting
- Jan. 29: WLRT Meeting