February, 2020

The Virginia Voter

Vol. 67 Issue 8

In this issue:

Suffer the Children 1
Legislation Update 2
Attention Voters 2
An Historic League Day is Coming! The League is 100 Years Old! 3
Redefining Women’s Advocacy 3

Deadline to register to vote, or update an existing registration, is Monday, February 10, 2020.

Suffer the Children

Deb Wake, President LWV-VA

As I write this, today is Martin Luther King Day—a day we should be celebrating Dr. King’s legacy of peace and service. Instead, armed militants swarmed Virginia’s capital city and the governor declared a state of emergency in preparation. Some lawmakers who received death threats stayed away and many groups canceled their planned visits—including an annual vigil for victims of gun violence. I’m sad because it wasn’t always this way. When my kids were young, the PTA would hold its lobby day on this date since students had the day off. One year we met with Senator Stosch who talked about community college as a more affordable way to earn a four year degree and then the kids had their picture taken with Governor Kaine.

Update: The following bills have passed and will be considered by the opposite chamber:

- SB70, Lucas’s background check bill and Plum’s HB2 companion bill.
- Barker’s red flag bill, SB240 and Sullivan’s companion bill, HB674.
- One handgun per month: Locke’s SB69 and companion bill, Ward’s HB812.

While I’m thankful that no one was harmed during Monday’s takeover, I’m saddened that children and other vulnerable groups were not able to come to Richmond to have their voices heard or to take part in and learn about our democratic process.
● Surovell’s SB35, which allows localities to restrict firearm possession and Price’s HB421
● Child Access Prevention bills from Kory (HB72) and Hayes (HB463) were incorporated into Hayes’s HB1083
● Bourne’s HB9 to report lost/stolen guns
● Mullins’s Protective Order bill, HB1004.

Legislation Update

Anna Weber, LWV-Arlington

Things are moving so fast in the General Assembly that I wish I had a time machine. This summary is coming to you from the long-ago days of a week and a half ago – and who knows what will have happened by the time you’re reading it?

Here's what we do know: over 3,000 bills were filed by the January 17 deadline. Now those bills have until February 11 to make it through their respective legislative chambers. After that, the surviving legislation will “cross over” to the other house.

While I can’t predict the future, I’m hoping the legislature will continue to make progress on issues important to the League. For example:

- **Expanding and defending voter access.** On January 20, the Senate passed SB111, which would allow for No-Excuse Absentee Voting (NEAV), a top League priority, for the entire 45 days preceding election day. Its House companion, HB1, is proceeding as well.

- **Supporting fair redistricting.** The League and all voting rights organizations support second passage of the redistricting constitutional amendment; SJ18 / HJ71 and supporting legislation SB203 & SB204. Ask your lawmakers to enshrine the redistricting commission with citizen members into our state constitution with a lasting amendment this session.

- The legislature will also consider bills on **same day voter registration** SB74 / HB187 / HB201, which will remove barriers to voting.

We are watching with interest the legislature's progress on matters such as restoration of voting rights, removing photo ID requirements, ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment, gun violence prevention, environmental protection, reproductive rights, and the repeal of discriminatory laws.

We encourage you to visit this page to find an action alert that matches your priorities and let your lawmakers know you support important goals.

Attention Voters

Deadline to register to vote in the March 3 Presidential Primary is February 10. Candidate information can be found at VOTE411.

These are the questions for the Dem Primary candidates on 411:

1. What policies do you support to improve and secure elections and voting in our country?

2. Please explain where you see opportunities for Democrats and
Republicans to find common ground on the very serious issues facing our country.

3. What, if any, steps will you take to reform current immigration policies?

4. Please explain the policies, if any, you support to address gun violence in America.

5. What, if any, actions would you work towards in your first 100 days to address the threats facing the US due to climate change?

17-year-olds who will be 18 by November 3 can vote in the March 3 primary. If you register to vote by going to the url for your school, your registration will count towards the Governor’s Challenge.

An Historic League Day is Coming! The League is 100 Years Old!

Celebrate the “Yesterdays and Tomorrows” of the League of Women Voters and be a part of history.

Joan Porte, 1st VP, LWV-VA

League Day is always a wonderful opportunity to visit members of the General Assembly and discuss our many programs 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.

Don’t miss this chance to be a part of League History!

Our schedule starts on February 12 at 8:15 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. Get a full rundown of all of our legislative priorities and progress made in the General Assembly. We will have speakers from our partner groups and members of the Assembly to brief us as well as our legislative team. A continental breakfast 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. It is best to schedule them between 10:15 and 12:30 PM.

If you’d like to be in the Gallery for the official recognition of the League of Women Voters 100th birthday, plan to start queuing at 11 AM. Proclamations will be read in both the House and Senate.

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 the first female self-made millionaire. Walker was a suffragist, an entrepreneur and philanthropist. Her life will be portrayed in an upcoming Netflix series featuring Octavia Spencer (from the movie Hidden Figures). We will share memories of our past and goals of our future with some surprises along the way!

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 AM for anyone interested.

Then it is off to the Historic Tredegar Civil War Museum, 500 Tredegar Street, Richmond for a 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.

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

Redefining Women’s Advocacy

Krysta Jones, LWV-Arlington*
When you hear the names Maggie Lena Walker and Sheila Johnson, you might immediately think of money. Richmond native Maggie Lena Walker is best known for becoming the first woman president of a bank. Salamander Hospitality CEO Sheila Johnson in Middleburg, VA is the first Black woman to attain a net worth of $1 billion and is the owner/major partner in three Washington sports teams. In addition to their wealth, they are both excellent examples of women who have redefined traditional advocacy based on their experiences, responsibilities to their community, and life goals.

When the League of Women Voters (LWV) was founded in 1920 to help women effectively exercise their newly gained right to vote, many Black women in the United States were not able to join their white colleagues. At the time, 80% of Black women were domestic workers - serving food, cleaning homes, and rearing children for the same White women who were now able to vote. Today, Black women are paid 61 cents for every dollar paid to a White man. Walker’s success at the time, and Johnson’s success today, illustrate the tenacity and dedication of both women despite societal barriers.

Sheila Johnson

When we examine the lives of these two women there are a few interesting parallels. In addition to their success as businesswomen, they were both politically active. Walker fought for women’s rights and ran for Superintendent of Public Instruction in Richmond. Johnson has vocally supported and donated to political candidates. Both women served as teachers: Johnson taught music at Sidwell Friends and Walker taught grade school for three years. Both women were also on the cutting edge of Black media. Walker founded the St. Luke Herald, a newspaper produced by and for Blacks. Johnson was the co-founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET) and created the BET teen talk show “Teen Summit”. Notably, both women also made conscious efforts to devote their time and energy to building their communities. Johnson has served on several boards fighting against global poverty, promoting the arts and encouraging civic leadership. At the age of 14, Walker joined the Independent Order of St. Luke, an organization dedicated to the social and financial advancement of African Americans, and would later serve in the organization’s leadership.

Advocacy and support for women’s rights has traditionally differed among Black and White women. Since Black women have had to advocate for their rights as women and Blacks, they have not had the luxury of only supporting women’s rights. They have often engaged in social uplift for the betterment of the community at large, and created their own organizations to accomplish this goal.
While one may not consider Walker and Johnson advocates in the traditional sense, to me, as successful Black women who defied the odds, they were women’s rights advocates and role models just by being entrepreneurial and creative women, and giving back in a myriad of ways.

As we take time to learn more about the history of Black Americans who have made contributions to the United States and the global community, I encourage your League to think about ways to partner with all types of Black women’s organizations and invite Black women from different backgrounds to participate in programs throughout the year. I urge you to not only invite the ones who appear on their face to mirror the explicit objectives of the LWV. By virtue of being successful Black women they likely have interesting examples of ways they have defied the odds and advocated for themselves, other women, their families and their communities.

*Krysta Jones produces and hosts LWV-Arlington radio program, “Making Democracy Work.”

Upcoming WLRT Meetings

- 2/5/20 8:30-9:30AM @SunTrust Center, 919 E Main St, Richmond, VA 23219, USA (Tidewater Room, 4th Floor). Focus will be on the Environment and on Transportation.
- 2/12/20 8:30-9:30AM @SunTrust Center, 919 E Main St, Richmond, VA 23219, USA (Tidewater Room, 4th Floor) ALSO LEAGUE DAY. Focus will be on Voting & Elections and Women’s Rights.
- 2/19/20 8:30-9:30AM @SunTrust Center, 919 E Main St, Richmond, VA 23219, USA (Tidewater Room, 4th Floor)
- 2/26/20 8:30-9:30AM @SunTrust Center, 919 E Main St, Richmond, VA 23219, USA (Tidewater Room, 4th Floor)
- 3/4/20 8:30-9:30AM @SunTrust Center, 919 E Main St, Richmond, VA 23219, USA (Tidewater Room, 4th Floor)

Other Important Dates

- 2/1/20 is Black History Month
- 2/11/20 is International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- 2/14/20 is the official 100th Birthday of the League of Women Voters
- 2/20/20 is the World Day of Social Justice
- 3/1/20 Women’s History Month Begins
- 3/3/20 is Primary Election Day