



In this issue:

| | | | |
|--|----------|---|-----------|
| You and LWV: Needed Now More than Ever | 1 | April 22 Reconvened General Assembly Session; House Report | 7 |
| Important Election Dates | 2 | More April 22 Reconvened General Assembly Session | 8 |
| LWVNCA Convention | 2 | Fair Redistricting in Virginia, Almost There | 9 |
| LWV-VA Council: Educating Voters in the Time of COVID-19 | 2 | Postcards to Reach Voters | 12 |
| Vote411: Important Information about Elections in COVID Environment | 3 | The Virtual Council Meeting | 13 |
| Membership Skills Survey | 4 | Video Conferencing Etiquette for Leaguers | 13 |
| Making an Impact: Internship Program | 5 | League Learning Lunches | 14 |
| Impact of COVID-19 on Housing and Homelessness in Virginia | 5 | | |

You and LWV: Needed Now More than Ever

Deb Wake, President LWV-VA

Just as we were assessing which legislation passed and were finalizing plans to inform voters of new election laws, we found ourselves in the grips of a pandemic. We set to work on a series of letters to the Commissioner of Elections, the Governor and the Attorney General to advocate for Vote By Mail as the best method for allowing voters to cast ballots while remaining safe. We also urged for the delaying of elections, as much as possible, so that the curve of the virus would flatten, sanitation supplies could be secured, and protocols established. We also partnered with the ACLU to file a lawsuit to have the state wave the witness requirement for absentee ballots so that our most vulnerable voters could vote while maintaining their health. We also worked with the Fair Elections Center to make sure Virginia was adhering to NVRA (National Voting Rights Act) requirements when setting registration deadlines as elections and primary dates were moved.

I'm sure I do not say thank you enough. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all for all your hard work. I appreciate the many, many hours so many devote to making the League effective in its mission of Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy. THANK YOU!!

Just because we're all sheltering in place as we are able, doesn't mean we're idle. Andrienne Konstas-Salvette (Membership Chair) has developed a skills survey to assess the hidden talents of our members. Please find the article in this newsletter and share a little bit more about yourself. We're also looking for interns (high school and college students) who would like to volunteer their time and become more involved with the League; see Erni Bridges' article. Krysta Jones (New Member Task Force Coordinator) is seeking mentors for new members—what a great way to connect seasoned members with new members and share institutional knowledge and experience. [Contact Krysta](#) for details.

Important Election Dates

May 19 Municipal Elections:

- April 13 Deadline to Register to Vote
- May 12 Deadline to Request Absentee Ballot

June 23 Primaries:

- May 26 Deadline to Register to Vote
- June 16 Deadline to Request Absentee Ballot

November 3 General Election

- October 13 Deadline to Register to Vote
- October 27 Deadline to Request Absentee Ballot

LWVNCA Convention

The National Capital Area League of Women Voters will hold its Convention Virtually on May 2, 2020 at 10am. Please refer to their website for [details](#).



LWV-VA Council: Educating Voters in the Time of COVID-19

Joan Porte, 1st VP LWV-VA

We have all heard the words “new normal” perhaps a bit too much recently. However, part of this required adjustment caused by Covid is the need for LWV Virginia to hold our first Council meeting via a virtual platform. Like it or not, we are being thrust into a more virtual world but instead of worrying about what we might lose, let's concentrate on what this format grants us.

Yes, we lose a certain amount of fun by being able to mingle with fellow League members. However, since there is no cost associated with this platform, everyone may come. Yes, adjusting to the computer platform does require a small learning curve. On the other hand, you get to attend wearing your fuzzy slippers and no one will be the wiser.



We have a fantastic agenda covering many topics including: ranked choice voting, the National Popular Vote Compact, the ACLU amendment on universal voting rights and information on how we can educate people about the 2020 election during the pandemic. Our keynote speaker will be Allison Robbins, General Registrar of Wise County, Virginia and President of Voter Registrars Association of Virginia (VRAV). We will also have updates on our two ongoing program studies on election security and affordable housing.

Council will be held on June 6, 2020 starting at 9:00 AM but you might want to tune in by

8:45 AM to make sure you are connected. Each local League and MAL has two voting delegates, but all members of LWV Virginia are invited. This is a great way for members to learn about so many issues – and at no cost! I hope as many of our members as possible will join us, but since the virtual room is limited to 300, we will record it so that those who were unable to “get a seat” don’t miss out.

All attendees must [RSVP](#) via this link. You will receive the login information for Zoom, two days prior to the meeting.

Be a pioneer with us – and join us for this first foray into cyber-Councils!

VOTE411 Important Information for Elections in COVID Environment

Janet Boyd, LWV-VA Voter Services Chair

Voter Services Chair, Janet Boyd, is a member of LWV-Arlington and has many years of service as her precinct’s Election Chief. She is a member of LWVUS Lobby Corps and serves on the LWV-VA Elections study group. She welcomes input on voter services and can be reached at voterservices@lww-va.org.



Due to COVID-19 risks, Governor Northam moved May Elections for Cities and Towns in the Commonwealth to May 19 (from May 5). He moved Primary Elections two weeks forward to June 23. Many locations will have both Republican and Democratic Primaries scheduled at the same time, so you will need to decide which Primary Ballot you want, whether you request an absentee ballot or vote in-person. All jurisdictions will hold a Republican Primary for a US Senate Seat; the winner will run against

incumbent Mark Warner in the November Election. Dual Primaries will be held in Congressional Districts: 1st, 4th, 5th, and 11th. Some localities will hold primaries as well for City Council or County Board. You do not

need to be registered with a party in order to vote in a primary but you do have to choose whether to vote in the Democratic or Republican primary when both are held in that locality.

We are in the process of updating [VOTE411](#) with details for the June 23 Primaries. Soon, you will be able to review candidate details on [VOTE411](#) to help make those decisions necessary to ensure your voice is heard. As you wait for those details, you can use [VOTE411](#) to check your registration to ensure your address and name are up to date, and to determine where your polling place is located. [VOTE411](#) provides important dates and the process for how to VOTE BY MAIL before Election Day. For the June 23 Primary, absentee voting either by mail or in-person begins on May 9, unless the general registrar's office is closed on Saturdays. For those jurisdictions, the absentee voting period begins on May 8. You can request an absentee ballot now.

Given all the challenges we are facing with COVID-19 and social distancing requirements, [VOTE411](#) has added a special coronavirus-specific page — in both English and Spanish. You should check this often, as information is updated regularly.

Additionally, LWV-VA is assembling a team to prepare educational materials for voters about the current absentee voting process, which allows every voter in Virginia to vote absentee due to COVID-19. The educational information will be available on [VOTE411.org](#), as well as on our blog and on materials that can be distributed to voters throughout Virginia. Contact [me](#) if you're interested in working on this project.

Membership Skills Survey

Andrienne Konstas-Salvette, Membership Chair LWV-VA



WE NEED YOU

Help LWV-VA empower voters and engage with leagues across the state.

SHARE YOUR SKILLS IN THE SKILLSHARE SURVEY!

TAKE THE SURVEY TODAY:
[HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/71CAXPUPDQANNQY6](https://forms.gle/71CAXPUPDQANNQY6)

We are committed to empowering voters and advocating for safe voting. While Coronavirus (COVID-19) has changed how we do business, it hasn't changed or slowed our mission. In fact, COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of League work. Now more than ever we need volunteers to support our efforts throughout the state. The LWV-VA Board is asking members to complete the [LWV-VA SkillShare Survey](#). By completing the survey you will be sharing your skills and interests with LWV-VA leadership and will further your engagement in LWV-VA activities and advocacy work. Help LWV-VA empower Virginia's voters by sharing your skills, complete the [LWV-VA SkillShare Survey](#) today! Contact Andrienne at membership@lww-va.org with questions.

Making an Impact: Internship Program

Erni Bridges, Intern Coordinator LWV-VA



Our New Internship Program is designed to provide students an opportunity to work for a limited period with a League of Women Voters of Virginia member or team.

Our Interns will assist us with our League initiative. Additional information about the program can be found [here](#) or [contact me](#) for more information.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Housing and Homelessness in Virginia

Alice Tousignant, LWV-VA Affordable Housing Study Chair.

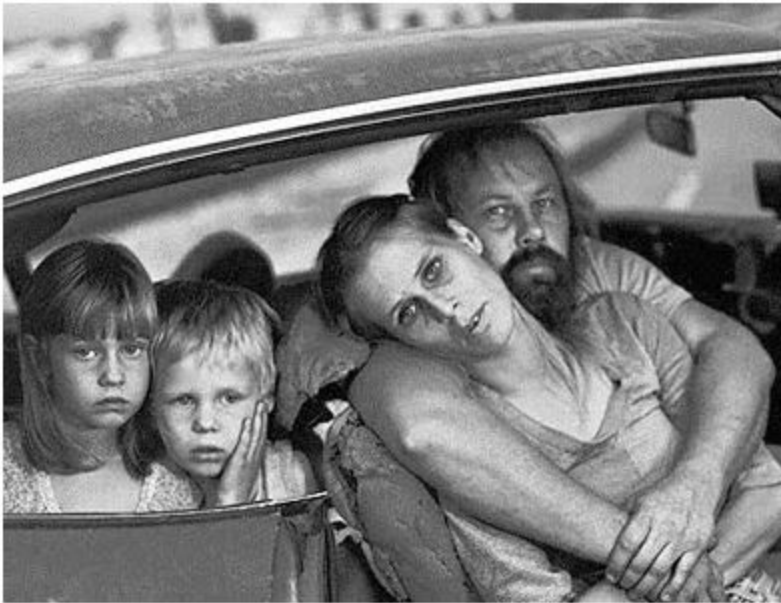
As you know, there is no escaping the impact of COVID-19 on our lives. Physical distancing, the shutdown of schools and non-essential businesses, the curtailing of non-essential travel, have all changed our lives. However, the impact of COVID-19 has been most severe for Virginia's most vulnerable citizens: people who are homeless and renters at or below 50% of Area Median Income who are housing cost burdened. These are also the groups that the LWV-VA Affordable Housing Study Committee is focusing its research on.

Impact on homelessness: According to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's January 2019 count of people experiencing homelessness in Virginia, there were about 4,200 households (5,800 people) who were homeless. Eighty-five percent of these households were staying in emergency shelters and 15% were staying in places not designed for human habitation. The CDC provided guidance that people who are homeless and are lacking safe shelter are at greater risk of contracting the virus

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html>.

People lacking shelter or living in congregate shelters are the most vulnerable. The CDC advice includes physical distancing as much as possible in shelters, isolating anyone who is showing symptoms and wearing protective gear. It is up to localities to determine how to mitigate the risks in their shelters and house persons who are unsheltered.

In the Richmond Region, for example, according to the local homeless coordinating agency, Homeward, they have implemented a plan to address the risks of COVID-19. Working with the Daily Planet Health Center (DPHC), homeless service provider staff were trained on safety protocols and screening measures, and ways to reconfigure congregate shelters to increase physical distancing. The DPHC also established a triage center to assess people who were symptomatic and going forward will be testing any new people prior to entering the shelter system. Thus far, Homeward and the City of Richmond have placed 150 previously unsheltered people in hotels and motels and are working on adding another 150 shelter beds to the system in order to allow for more physical distancing in current shelter space. CARE Act and City funds are being used to pay for hotels or motels.



Impact on very low income renters:

Unemployment claims in Virginia for the past four weeks (March 21st through April 11) were close to 411,000 according to the Virginia Employment Commission <https://www.vec.virginia.gov/node/11845>.

Being unemployed is terrible for anyone but can be devastating for very low income and extremely low income renters who usually are living paycheck to paycheck and do not have emergency savings or other safety nets.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), in Virginia, there are approximately 247, 000 extremely low income renter households with income at

30% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI), which is \$18,600 for a one person household <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/virginia>. Eighty-four percent of them are housing cost-burdened, which means they pay more than 30% of their income (a common standard of housing affordability) for rent and utilities. Seventy percent of extremely low income renter households are severely cost-burdened, meaning they pay over 50% of their income for rent and utilities. While most extremely low income households are seniors and/or disabled, 39% are in the labor force.

Another 177,000 renter households in Virginia are very low income, with income at 31 to 50% of AMI, which is \$31,000 for a one person household. Seventy-six percent of these households are cost burdened and 32% are severely cost burdened. While data is not available from the NLIHC on the percentage of very low income renter households who are employed, since their income is higher, it is likely that most of them are in the labor force.

With rent being the single highest expense for households, especially those in the lowest income bracket, the question is: Are people able to pay their rent or will they be evicted? According to the National Multifamily Housing Council, 84% of renters made a full or partial rent payment by April 12th compared to 90% at the same time period in 2019 <https://www.nmhc.org/research-insight/nmhc-rent-payment-tracker/>. While this figure is encouraging to those in the industry, unemployment is still rising, and this trend may not continue. There is general agreement in the industry that the month of May will be the first month when the full impact of the shutdown is felt.

While the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has issued an eviction moratorium on certain federally-insured multifamily and assisted properties through July, it is up to states and local governments to issue moratoria on properties not covered by HUD. The Virginia Supreme Court issued a stay on court hearings and judgments through April 26th but it did not issue a moratorium on court filings. (It is presumed that the stay will be extended until at least May 8th to align with Governor Northam's stay-at-home order.) Landlords can and are continuing to issue Pay or Quit Notices and filing Unlawful Detainers during this

time. Many states have issued emergency orders with many more tenant protections during this COVID-19 crisis than Virginia. The Eviction Lab at Princeton and the Columbia Law School partnered to develop a policy scorecard for all 50 states and the District of Columbia of critical measures included in and left out of pandemic responses related to evictions and housing. On a scale of 0 to 5 with 5 being the best score, Virginia was ranked 31st with a score of .78 right behind Utah and Alabama <https://evictionlab.org/covid-policy-scorecard/>.

In order to ensure that very low income renter households are not evicted, emergency rental assistance is being used by some local governments in Virginia with funding from the CARE Act that can be used for this purpose. Depending on what the need will be in the near future, more funding may be necessary. The NLIHC is backing a \$100 billion emergency rental assistance package that has some traction in both the U.S. House and Senate, but most likely will not be included in the next CARE package.

For more information about COVID-19 and its impact on housing in your area, the best resource is an interactive Dashboard that was developed by Housing Virginia that is updated twice weekly. This Dashboard shows confirmed COVID-19 case counts along with measures of housing instability and economic status for each locality across Virginia

<https://www.housingvirginia.org/toolkits/covid19>/[tps://www.housingvirginia.org/toolkits/covid19/](https://www.housingvirginia.org/toolkits/covid19/).

April 22 Reconvened General Assembly Session; House Report

Mary Crutchfield, LWV-VA Legislative Coordinator



shutterstock.com • 103830440

Virginia legislators returned to Richmond on April 22 for the Reconvened Session in order to vote on Governor Northam's vetoes and amendments to legislation passed in the 2020 General Assembly Session. Because of the corona virus pandemic, the House met in a large tent on the Capitol grounds and the Senate met at the Science Museum of Virginia. Lobbyists were not permitted, so I observed the House session via livestream from the safety of my home.

Speaker Filler-Corn began with a speech addressing the challenge facing lawmakers as they gathered in an improvised setting during a

national emergency. "A hundred years ago, the 110th General Assembly met in the shadow of the Spanish Flu a worldwide pandemic. Twenty-two years later, in January of 1942, the General Assembly met in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. None of these events interfered with our predecessors' work to deliver democracy. The pandemic will not thwart our work to do the people's business. We must carry on and complete the business we are here to do for our fellow Virginians."

The only bill vetoed by the Governor was [HB119](#) (Knight), the milk bill; the House sustained the Governor's veto. The Governor made over 60 amendments to legislation passed during the regular session. After pulling

out bills they wanted to debate separately, the delegates passed the remaining bills as a block. I will report on just a few bills that were a legislative priority for us.

[HB207](#) (VanValkenburg): Absentee voting; no excuse required, permanent absentee voter list. The Governor made two technical amendments: one to move the position of a line and another to strike language to avoid confusion over registration dates. The amendments were approved.

[HB29](#), Budget Bill (Torian), [Amendment #36](#) to move Virginia municipal elections from May to November. The amendment failed to pass on the first vote and passed upon being reconsidered. However, it ultimately failed because the Senate did not also support the amendment. On April 24, the [Governor moved municipal elections from May 5 to May 19](#)—which is the latest he has the authority to move them.

[HB1255](#) (Price): Redistricting: congressional and state legislative districts, standards and criteria. The amendment changes the deadlines for which sheriffs, jail superintendents, and the Department of Corrections need to submit information to DLS (Department of Legislative Services) from April to August and September. The amendment was approved.

[HB421](#) (Price): Gun Violence Prevention (GVP): firearms, ammunition, etc control by localities. The amendment clarifies language to include ROTC, inter-collegiate sports teams that involve firearms and and park owned by a locality. The amendment was approved.

[HB1004](#) (Mullin): GVP: protective orders, possession of firearms, surrender or transfer of firearms, penalty. The Governor's amendments changed a word: "entry" to "issuance" and changed the language and penalty structure in a phrase. The amendments give judges the ability to act quickly and comes at the request of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Alliance. The amendments were adopted.

[HB981](#) (Herring): Environment: clean energy and community flood preparedness act fund. The amendments were technical and ensure that Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) revenue goes to the right place for resiliency measures and is secure. The amendments were adopted.

[HB704](#) (Keam): Environmental Justice, state agency policy, Virginia Council on Environmental Justice established. The amendment expands the definition of the policy. The amendment was approved.

More April 22 Reconvened General Assembly Session

Carol Noggle, Volunteer Lobbyist LWV-VA

The votes of individual Delegates are not posted on LIS yet: April 28. Action on some bills that were reported in the [April Virginia Voter](#).

The unique arrangement for this reconvened session was remarkable in itself, but the business went forward and was completed. There had been speculation that it would need more than one day. The way House Clerk, Suzette Denslow, managed to stand for 8 hours and move so smoothly through the agenda was amazing.

[SB2](#) and [HB972](#): Decriminalize Marijuana.

House: Governor Northam's recommendation for HB972 to exclude the opportunity for a trial by jury was discussed where it was explained that any civil charge that could occur with implementation of the bill would be highly unlikely to warrant a trial anyway. The recommended change, including #6, passed with a vote of 59 to 32.

Senate: SB2 had the same recommendation from the Governor but it caused significant debate. Deliberately not allowing for a jury trial was vehemently opposed in the debate, followed by a vote of 6 to 34 that defeated it.

Information on the Senate vote was relayed to some Delegates. Given that report, Delegate Freitas asked for a reconsideration of the House vote on HB972. The subsequent vote to support recommendation #6 was 1 to 90; thus, allowing jury trials to remain in the original bill. Similarly, the Senate rejected recommendation #6 when they voted on HB972.

[SB793](#) and [HB33](#) "Fishback bill" regarding lack of parole:

The Governor's recommendation on the "Fishback" bill, SB793, was to make it effective immediately so that the Parole Board could start considering parole hearings for those who had been sentenced when juries were not informed that parole was not an option. Opposition in the Senate was strong because of a concern that the Parole Board was given too much power. This was based on a recent action of the Parole Board to release a felon who had killed a police officer. Supporters of the Governor's recommendation stated the bill still has provisions for establishing specific procedures for the parole board such as defining specific conditions for parole and specific restrictions. The vote to accept immediate implementation was 23-17.

The Governor's recommendation for SB973 and HB33 passed in both chambers.

[SB316](#): move June primaries to 3rd Tuesday; the Governor's recommendation was to require re-enactment in 2021. Both chambers accepted the Governor's amendment.

How ironic that the 2020 June Primary has been moved to the 4th Tuesday!

Overall: The report in the [Virginia Mercury](#) gave an excellent overview of the day.

Fair Redistricting in Virginia, Almost There

Sara Fitzgerald, LWV- Falls Church

When the Virginia General Assembly approved a constitutional amendment to reform the way the Commonwealth does its decennial redistricting, it marked a major victory for activists who have worked hard, particularly over the last few years, to stem partisan gerrymandering. Now our attention will turn to making sure Virginia voters follow through and approve the amendment in the November election.

As I worked side by side with redistricting advocates, I was surprised how many of them first got involved with the issue in the wake of the 2016 election. For me—and for many other League members—we had been working on this issue for more than a decade.

I joined the League in 2004, when I was recruited by friends and neighbors soon after I moved from Arlington to Falls Church. I retired about a year later, just as the state League was seeking members to work on the second phase of a statewide study of gerrymandering. By then I had concluded that most of the legislation I supported would never be passed until legislative and congressional districts in the Commonwealth were drawn to reflect the needs of citizens rather than incumbent politicians. As a former journalist, I also thought the study would be a good way to put my professional skills to work.



Our study committee was chaired by Dianne Blais of the Fairfax League, and included a number of other past and present state League leaders, including Therese Martin, Lois Page, and Sue Worden. Then-State League President Olga Hernandez was a big supporter of our work. The first part of “Does Your Vote Count?” can be reviewed at

https://lwg-vva.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/action-advocacy/a&a-archives/redistricting_2005_09_doesyourvotereallycount_ptI_lwgfa.pdf. Part Two, which I worked on, can be reviewed at https://lwg-vva.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/action-advocacy/a&a-archives/redistricting_2006_09_doesyourvotereallycount_ptII_lwgfa.pdf.

Our committee reviewed the independent redistricting commissions that were then in place around the country. Also fresh in our minds was a move by Texas Republicans to redraw that state’s districts in the middle of the decade to capture more congressional seats for their party. (The U.S. Supreme Court later held up their map for all but one district.)

We were also very concerned about the way in which gerrymandering had contributed to a stagnation of democracy in Virginia. For instance, in the 2007 General Assembly races, 17 of the 40 members of the State Senate had no opposition and only nine races were decided by a margin of fewer than 10 percentage points.

Meanwhile, in the House of Delegates, 57 of the 100 delegates had no opposition and only 12 races were considered “competitive.” That pattern had persisted since at least 2003. While the demographics of some regions of the state will inevitably make it difficult to promote competition in every district, it was felt that, in general, competitive races would be healthier for our democracy.

As part of our work, we tried to survey members of the General Assembly to determine whether they would support reforms as the 2011 round of redistricting approached. Our work eventually led to statewide League consensus meetings, and an update to the State League’s position on redistricting. At the time, our committee felt it was too big of a stretch to pass a constitutional amendment, but we still sought legislative changes that would improve transparency and citizen participation.

In an encouraging move, then-Republican Gov. Bob McDonnell appointed a bipartisan independent citizen’s advisory commission that held hearings around the state and put forward plans of its own. In addition, college teams competed to see who could draw the fairest maps. I participated in hearings held by both the McDonnell commission and key state legislators, and made speeches, wrote opinion pieces and appeared on local cable TV news shows to try and educate the public. Because control of the General Assembly was then divided between the two major parties, the climate seemed ripe for reform.

But that was not to be. Instead the parties worked out a back-room deal in which the Democrats gerrymandered the Senate, and the Republicans gerrymandered the districts for both the House of Delegates and Congress. Soon after that, the Democrats’ deal backfired when a senator resigned and in the ensuing shuffle, they lost control of the Senate. By making the districts safer for the incumbent, they also made it harder for them to flip districts, and they lost control of the chamber for the next eight years.

But out of that battle, a group of concerned Virginians joined in 2014 to launch OneVirginia2021, a bipartisan coalition that committed itself to working to eliminate partisan gerrymandering in the state. (Anne Sterling, another state League leader, has served as a board member of OneVirginia2021 since its earliest days.) The organizers hired as their director a member of the William and Mary Law School team that prepared one of the winning maps in the college competition, and before too long, I was making speeches with Brian Cannon, and becoming inspired by the intelligence and passion he brought to the cause. About the same time, I participated on a national League task force that sought to review the national League’s position on the issue. As part of that work, I reviewed redistricting in Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, and Florida—all states on the front lines of recent battles about gerrymandering. Over the years, many of us still tried to get the Republican-controlled General Assembly to approve legislation to reform the process, only to watch as most of the bills died in early-morning subcommittee meetings on party-line votes. There were times in the most recent session when we feared the Democrats would kill the amendment the second time around, now that they were in power and the world looked different. Fortunately, that did not happen.

While the amendment may not embody all that we might have wanted, it certainly would represent a substantial improvement over the way the process has been done in the past. We must continue to work hard to “carry it across the goal line” in November.

In the years since I first raised my hand, it has been gratifying to see the number of people, including many League members, who have gotten actively involved, whether they were traveling to Richmond to lobby legislators, going door-to-door to distribute literature in key districts, organizing educational forums, staging parties on Elbridge Gerry’s birthday, or soliciting petition signatures. In particular, Jackie Rivas and Chris

DeRosa stepped up to coordinate the League's advocacy efforts during this session, and Deb Wake, Julia Tanner and Carol Noggle provided broader advocacy leadership.

It's been a long time coming, but we are almost there!

Postcards to Reach Voters

Suzan Chastain



Earlier this year, I worked with my congregation, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, on plans for non-partisan voter mobilization for the 2020 elections. We would begin with in-person voter registration with the League of Women Voters and NAACP in our community. Those plans, like so many, were derailed by COVID-19. We

felt it was important to move forward with this work despite the pandemic and looked for ways to do voter registration remotely. We found an inspiring partner in the non-partisan [Reclaim Our Vote Campaign of the Center for Common Ground](#).

Reclaim Our Vote is a volunteer-driven, voter outreach campaign helping empower voters of color and fighting voter suppression, especially in the South. The Reclaim Our Vote Campaign was officially launched in 2018 by the Center for Common Ground of Virginia, a people of color lead 501(c)3 organization whose national partners include the NAACP, Black Voters Matter, Mi Familia Vota, VoteRiders, and DemLabs. The Reclaim Our Vote campaign has reached out to nearly a million voters of color in states with a long history of voter suppression and has measurably increased voter participation.

Our congregation partnered with the NAACP on a Reclaim Our Vote project to send postcards to eligible voters of color in North Carolina who have been removed from voter registration rolls. Eligible voters of color are being purged from voting rolls at much higher rates than white voters. Often eligible voters first learn they have been de-registered when they turn up at the polls to vote. At that point it is too late for them to cast a vote that will count.

The project involved handwriting postcards to mostly rural, often older, voters of color in North Carolina who were likely unaware they had been de-registered. Reclaim Our Vote provided names, contact information and detailed instructions for alerting de-registered voters and offering them ways to check their status and how to re-register. Volunteers provided postcards and postage, wrote and mailed the postcards. Postage-paid postcards can be obtained from the post office or ordered online, so volunteers were able to participate while safely sheltering in place. Our volunteers enjoyed the opportunity to do meaningful voter registration either individually or as a family activity.

The Virtual Council Meeting

Janet Gorn, LWV-VA Program Director

The Coronavirus Pandemic has affected every nook and cranny of our lives and will for some time to come. As a result, we have adjusted by repurposing our lives to the “New Norm,” by turning to innovative use of alternative resources such virtual Information Technology (IT) and Communication Technology (CT).

Just what is IT and CT and how are these tools used? Information Technology (IT) and Communication Technology (CT) are the use of computer hardware/software, computer networks, the Internet, and other information distribution technologies, such as telephones or television. These IT and CT tools are used to transmit, retrieve, or store information via Conference Calls, Video Conferencing with Zoom, GO-TO- MEETINGS, and Webinars.



Under the LWV-VA Bylaws, a meeting of the Council, which is scheduled for June 6, 2020, is required to be held biennially in even numbered years, to provide a forum for Representatives to give guidance to the Board, review the status of the Study Program, and adopt an operating budget for the next fiscal year. However, under Governor Ralph Northam’s guidelines for responding to the Coronavirus Pandemic threat, conducting a face-to-face meeting the size of the Council Meeting is prohibited. After reviewing options, the Board weighed the Virtual Council Meeting IT alternatives and determined that the Council Meeting should be conducted using the “Zoom” virtual information tool.

Experiencing the Zoom Virtual Council Meeting option for the June 6th Council Meeting opens an exciting window of opportunity for a larger LWV-VA audience to benefit without the limitations of travel and time challenges; and in particular helps nurture political education and activity, encourages League members to become more involved in the legislative and election process, and to recruit new members. However, it requires some homework from Council Representatives to develop computer skills to fully participate in the Zoom meeting. Here's a list of pre-recorded webinars for using Zoom:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/217214286-Watch-Recorded-Training-Sessions>, and a list of live webinars: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360029527911>.

Video Conferencing Etiquette for Leaguers

Andrienne Konstas-Salvette



As League business moves to virtual meeting spaces, members may feel lost. League members are being ask to adept to video conferencing with a steep learning curve. Luckily, one thing that video conferencing and in-person meetings have in common is...etiquette. Applying what and how the League conducts business to a virtual setting will help members get over the learning curve. Here are a few tips that League members can take form in-person gatherings to virtual ones:

1. Mute yourself when not speaking. Much like a board or unit meeting, holding a side conversation can be extremely distracting; no matter how quiet you think you are. Microphones are sensitive to all sound around you; they pick up any sound and amplify it to all on the videoconference to hear. On most video conferencing services meeting hosts are able to mute all participants and chat boxes allow people to write messages to individuals or the entire group without sound.

2. Be on time. Sneaking into a physical meeting late may be excused if the meeting is large, however everything is more visible in a videoconference. In other words, we can see you even if we can't hear you.

3. Ensure your technology works correctly. When you go to an in-person or unit meeting you come prepared with the tools that will help you present information: notes, documents, visuals. Video conferencing technology is another tool; test the service before a meeting. Ask a friend/neighbor/family member to hold a test video meeting. Remember to test the technology 15 to 30 minutes before your scheduled meeting.

4. Frame the camera. Make sure your background/artwork is something you're comfortable sharing.

Here are a few links to help you become more familiar with video conferencing and holding League meetings virtually:

[LWV-US COVID-19 Guidance Page](#)

[Techsoup Guidance On Video Conferencing](#)

May 7, 3-4:30pm: LWVUS Beginner's Guide to Social Media Tools. Register [here](#).

League Learning Lunches

12PM every other Friday until LWV-VA Council



To allow members to become more familiar with video conferencing tools, particularly Zoom; LWV-VA is hosting "League Learning Lunches." Bring your lunch and any questions you may have on video conferencing, League activities during COVID-19, or social distancing for these informal League meetings. Please see below for a calendar and RSVP to Andrienne at membership@lww-va.org for meeting access.

May 8: Zoom Meetings and Being a Good Host

May 22: Sharing your league experience on Social Media

June 5: LWV guidance on virtual Council/Conventions