STATE BOARD LETTER
August-September 2020

LWVMD Calendar

September
9/17 - 3:15 PM – 5:00 PM  Constitution Day – Register here
9/19  Vote411 Goes Live!
9/22  National Voter Registration Day
9/26 – 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM  Fall Workshop – Register here

October
10/13 – 12:00 AM – 9:00 PM  Last Day to Register to Vote Online or by Mail
10/20  Mail-in Ballot Requests Must be Received by Board of Elections
10/26 – 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM  Early Voting Starts (Same Day, In-person Voter Registration Available)

Planning your local league calendar? Click here to see the whole calendar.

Presidents’ Message

One of the questions local Leagues must face during the “age of COVID” is how to properly do “consensus” in a virtually connected world. A previous article in the SBL addressed “Zoom fatigue” and we are very aware of how we can miss facial clues in online meetings when speakers are sometimes reduced to thumbnail screen images!

In my view, the key consensus question following a thorough discussion is this: "Is there anyone who feels so strongly that we should not approve this position that they wish to block consensus?” That usually gets any elephants out in the open! The group members then work with the members who are in strong opposition to understand their objections which will often lead to important insights. In my opinion we do not have consensus when even one member wishes to "block". More often members who are not sure will go with the majority rather than choose to “block” the consensus process. Remember, the beauty of using consensus is that it
is NOT a super majority vote, but rather it represents a community decision that is filled with mutual respect.

When a League spokesperson advocates on your behalf, whether speaking in public or writing a letter, s/he is standing on the solid shoulders of members who have used this process faithfully for a long time, dare I say, “for centuries”! I treasure the fact that when I talk about League positions that I can take a moment to describe the process we use. I have found that we are taken more seriously when people learn that our positions are more than supermajority votes - they represent a diverse community of persons “working across the aisle” to determine what would be best for everyone.

Can we do consensus virtually or by telephone? We can because we must. The time it will take is worth the effort. We can use the voting “tools” in Zoom and other online applications to take a straw poll/reading of the group, but if there is any dissent, we must remember to ask, “Is there anyone who feels so strongly that we should not approve this position that they wish to block consensus?” (And then refocus and continue the conversation.)

Virtually yours, Richard Wilson, Co-President

August State Board Meeting Highlights

- Because Ballot Question #1 in the General Election is consistent with the LWVMD position for increasing the budgetary authority of the legislature to achieve a more effective budget process, the Board voted to endorse its passage.

- The Vote-By-Mail (or VBM) study group had representatives from 9 local Leagues! Their recommended consensus questions were approved by the Board for presentation at the Fall 2020 Workshop. (See the last page in this issue of the State Board Letter.)

- We are in the process of hiring a part-time Administrative Coordinator to work with our full-time State Director, Ashley Oleson.

- The Board authorized spending money from reserves for an additional laptop in the office and for translation of Voters’ Guides for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Two Board committees were formed on 8/1/2020, the DEI Committee (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and a Fundraising Committee have both already met two times in the month of August, and both committees have involved 50% non-board membership!

Richard Wilson for Theresa Freligh, Secretary
Voter Services

Voter education has never been more important than in the upcoming November elections. The election format is a combination of ballot application forms, mail-in voting, early voting and voting on election day – a new combination for our state, and a combination that is occurring in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Vote By Mail in Just 4 Steps

1. Request your Ballot
   - Online
   - By Mail
   - In-Person
   TODAY - October 20

2. Complete Your Ballot
   Review your candidates and issues on Vote411.org and make your choices!

3. Look for Your Ballot in the Mail
   Ballots will start being mailed out at the end of September.

4. Return Your Ballot
   No later than 8pm on November 3rd
   Get your ballot in early and get your vote counted!

The League favors mail-in voting for safety reasons. For the general election, this is a two-stage process: submitting an application for a mail-in ballot and voting the mail-in ballot. Voters may submit an online ballot application, download and print a ballot application, or return the ballot application that comes in the mail. Whichever option they choose, they should make their request as soon as possible so that the Board of Elections can get the requests processed and the ballots mailed in a timely fashion. The online application is particularly helpful to the Board as it eliminates the work of processing a paper application, but this option is only available to voters with a Maryland driver’s license or state ID card. All applications must be received by the Board of Elections by October 20. Voters can check the status of their request online or call their local Board of Elections for information.

If voters are requesting their ballots online, we recommend that they request that their ballot be sent by mail. With electronic delivery, ballots are printed at home. The information on them must be transferred by an election worker to a regular ballot in order to be read by the machine readers. This is very time consuming in a high-volume mail-in election. In general, only voters who need to use the online ballot-marking device or use a screen reader should download a ballot.

Communications with voters concerning mail-in voting should emphasize the importance of signing and dating the ballot envelope and getting ballots in as soon as possible so that counting can be done in a timely fashion. In order to be counted, ballots must be placed in a secure drop box or postmarked by 8:00 pm on November 3. Drop boxes will be available
from late September through Election Day. Most local Board have their locations already posted on their websites.

The options for in-person voting have been expanded for the general election, and voters may use any vote center in their county (or Baltimore City). Efforts will be made to keep the centers safe, with social distancing, masks, barrier shields, frequently cleaning, etc. However, the total number of centers is drastically reduced from what is usually available due to the difficulty in getting election judges, and lines are expected to be long. **The League is therefore encouraging Early Voting, which will be available from October 26 through November 2, 7:00 am – 8:00 pm daily, including weekends.** The lists of vote centers are generally up now on the websites for the local boards of elections. Statewide lists of vote centers are to be posted on this site but they are not available yet.

Finally, as the election approaches, **Maryland voters will once again be able to use VOTE411.org to see how the candidates answered the League’s questions. VOTE411 is currently available for election information. The sections with the candidates’ responses will go live on September 19. Many thanks to our hardworking volunteers across the state for making this happen.**

For all of this information and more, – Please visit our website for a comprehensive resource for updated election information from our Voter Service team

_Barbora Crain, Vice-President_  
_Voter Services_

**LWVMD in Birdland**

Recently, LWVMD has been spending time in Birdland commemorating the 100 history of the League of Women Voters and sharing information about how to get ready to vote this November.

On August 18th, the anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment, our co-President, Lois Hybl joined Rob Long to share a bit about the history of the movement and how the commitment of LWV members to provide unbiased nonpartisan election information lives on today. Click the image below to watch Lois’ interview!
Meanwhile, our State Director, Ashley Oleson joined the Baltimore Ravens to help educate players and staff about changes to the election process amid COVID-19 and provide them with valuable information to ensure they are able to safely cast their ballots and encourage friends, family and fans to do the same.

This year, the Ravens are embarking on a far-reaching digital GOTV campaign to help educate thousands of fans, partnering with LWVMD, RISE to Vote, and NFL Votes for up-to-date election information in the time of coronavirus – including, of course, promotion of our one-stop-shop for election information, Vote411. Check out the Raven’s voter information page by clicking the image above.
Urge Your Alma Mater to Get Out the (Student) Vote

The Ask Your College campaign mobilizes volunteers to ask colleges they have a connection with – as alums, faculty, or parents of students – to commit to the goal of full student voter participation and take steps right now to realize that goal. In the midst of this crisis, supporters need to inspire colleges and universities to ensure that every one of America’s 20 million students is educated and empowered to vote. A national wave of alums, parents, faculty, and friends can help make that a reality.

To make volunteers’ work as easy as possible, the Ask Your College campaign has created tons of resources, including sample letters to college leadership. Sue and Joe Garonzik, LWV-Baltimore County, took the initiative a step further, drafting letters that encourage campuses to promote VOTE411 as well as voting.

Please email nchambers@lwvmd.org if you have questions about this initiative or to let me know that you’ve written your alma mater. Thank you!

Niecy Chambers, Student Initiative Coordinator

A Message from the Coalition for the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future

You’re invited to “Override the Blueprint Veto: A Call to Action” on September 24th at 5:30 pm. This ONLINE event is designed for Marylanders across the state to come together, hear about the latest Blueprint updates, and get resources to take action to ensure we can override the veto of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

This is a space limited event so please be sure to RSVP today. You can RSVP at this link.

The governor’s veto is a disappointing but hopefully temporary setback. Now more than ever, we need the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future to create strong schools in every neighborhood by expanding career and technical education, hiring more educators and increasing their pay, providing additional support to struggling learners, and delivering a more prosperous future for our state.

As an added bonus, Dr. Kirwan will be joining us as a special guest for part of the evening. We hope that you are able to join us and please feel free to invite others,

Lois Hybl, co-President
LWVMD Partners to Promote New Civic Holiday: National Voter Education Week: October 5 – 9, 2020

National Voter Education Week is a new national nonpartisan digital voter education campaign that seeks to help voters bridge the gap between registering to vote and actually casting a ballot. During this week of interactive education, voters will learn to find their polling location, understand their ballot, make a plan to vote in person or remotely, and more. The resources provided within VOTE411 align closely with the goals of the campaign, and the League looks forward to this collaboration.

National Voter Education Week will be held the week of October 5, falling between National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) on September 22, and Vote Early Day, launching this year on October 24. Each day of the week will have a theme: #VoteReady, #BallotReady, #MailReady, #VotePlanReady and #WeReady2020.

Local Leagues are encouraged to contribute to and promote this digital campaign. Social media graphics are available along with other content. Please send any suggestions, questions or concerns to nchambers@lwvmd.org.

Niecy Chambers

Civic Education Opportunity for Local Leagues

Last year’s state civic education study asked local Leagues to undertake actions that would promote civic awareness among younger citizens. Hearty congratulations to the Montgomery County LWV for implementing two successful civic programs in the midst of the pandemic!

Yoke San Reynolds explains. “Our new Civic Education Action Committee met for the first time in February and decided on two initial projects. Our first one was a civic education workshop for teachers, which we ran in June/July. Our second is ongoing: to develop Student Service Learning (SSL) projects that are approved by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and posted on the Volunteer Center website. So far, we have posted five, one of which (Ralph Watkin’s) is closed (fully subscribed) and not available for viewing. As of mid-July, the other four are still posted although three have been closed for registration but are in progress. By clicking on the project title, you can view the project descriptions and requirements of these four at https://montgomerycountymd.galaxydigital.com/agency/detail/?agency_id=76373.”
The strong response by Montgomery County students, who quickly filled the available slots of the League’s virtual SSL projects, suggests an opportunity for other Leagues. Be sure to check with your school board as state-required SSL requirements vary significantly by county.

Niecy Chambers, Membership Chair

Membership Announcement

The second bi-monthly Zoom meeting for Membership Chairs and other interested members will be on Wednesday, September 16 from 5 to 6 p.m. Our focus will be member engagement and participants are encouraged to share examples of what has and hasn’t worked. If time permits, we’ll consider the interplay between the League’s DEI policy and member engagement and, as always, there will be an opportunity for questions and networking. Please click here to register or contact nchambers@lwvmd.org for more information.

Niecy Chambers, Membership Chair
Challenging Voter Suppression and Disenfranchisement Under the Constitution

Virtual Constitution Day Program September 17th - 3:15 -5:00 PM

The 14th Annual Constitution Day Program and Reception is co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Maryland, the University of Maryland Carey School of Law, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and the University of Maryland-College Park, Social Science Department, MLAW Program. Unlike our 13 previous Constitution Day Programs, the 2020 program will be virtual due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions in this state and at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law, where classes and events are only online this semester.

We will have our Zoom event from 3:15 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 17. The 1 ¼ hour Constitution Day Program will be on the topic, Challenging Voter Suppression and Disenfranchisement Under the Constitution.

The Moderator is Peter Danchin (Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development; Jacob A. France Professor of Law).

Panelists include Larry Gibson (Morton and Sophia Macht Professor of Law) and Visiting Professor Stephen Mortellaro, an expert on voting rights and election law. A Q & A session follows.

The Reception will be virtual, not our usual University gift of a beautiful Preamble-decorated cake, Leaguers’ homemade finger foods, and the law school’s beverages. It will be a 30-minute feast of topic-related discussions by attending Leaguers, law students, prelaw students, faculty and staff.

This event is free.

To register, [Click Here](#). You will type your name and email address.

Questions? andreagruhl@aol.com.

![COVID-19 Voting Litigation](image-url)

Click the Image Above Learn about How LWV’s Litigation Team is Fighting Voter Suppression Amid COVID-19
Please mark your calendars and sign up for a Fall Workshop not to be missed. It is loaded with timely information on ballot questions, action and the **Vote By Mail Study**. Nancy Soreng will present the state ballot questions, our Action Directors, Kimberly Scott and Roy Appletree will fill us in on our new Action Agenda and then we will have a briefing on the upcoming consensus issue: **Vote by Mail** which will be led by the committee chair, Linda Kohn. Registration is only $5.00 for members; $10.00 for non-members.

The date is Saturday September 26. Registration starts at 9am. No formal dress necessary.

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 - 9:20</td>
<td>Sign in</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:20 - 9:30</td>
<td>Welcome, Announcements, Roll Call LL</td>
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<td>9:30 - 9:50</td>
<td>State Ballot Questions Briefing</td>
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<td>9:50 - 10:15</td>
<td>Action 2020 – A New Direction</td>
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<td>10:30 - 12:00</td>
<td>Briefing on “Vote by Mail” Study and Consensus process with Q&amp;A</td>
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Please join us for this important and informative event.

$5.00 members
$10.00 non-member

[Click here to sign up](#)