STATE BOARD LETTER
February 2021

LWVMD Calendar

March
02 – Legislative Day (virtual) – 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM Online Event – register here
20 – State Board Meeting – 9:00 AM - Noon – Online Event
27 – First Seder

April
04 – Easter
16 – Consensus Reports on Initiative Study due from Local Leagues
19 - State Board Meeting – 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM – Online Event
29 – Capitol Hill Day – Online Event

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

Presidents’ Message

It is not like we have all of the answers! But as League members, we do share some key guiding principles. Three principles spring immediately to mind: democracy, nonpartisanship and diversity, equity and inclusion or DEI for short. These three will carry us a long way but upholding “principles” requires hard work and “handling with care.” Hopefully as you participate in your local League’s discussion of our current LWV State positions you were able to fall back on our uniting principles to discern whether we need to “retain,” “update,” or remove positions from our current platform.

Though I cannot place my finger on a source, I am reminded of a piece of social research I once heard reported on NPR where an ever-broader number of persons were asked questions like “What is the height of the Eiffel Tower.” Researchers found that the average of answers to a range of similar questions got closer to the mark when more people “voted.” To me this is the backbone of our belief in democracy - the more people we involve, the better for everyone. Notably we put this principle into practice with our work on redistricting. We support fairly drawn election districts because we believe that fair boundaries are the only way to catch and hold citizen involvement and that is our goal.
Our work for redistricting reform is also very nonpartisan. As our National Executive Director, Virginia Kase, noted in her recent blog post on nonpartisanship, “We never derive our positions from politicians, and even when candidates or parties support the same issue, we never endorse them.” Again, and again politicians in Maryland tell us that they oppose redistricting reform because Maryland might lose at least one Democratic seat in the U.S. Congress to the Republican party. Yet the League supports redistricting reform that favors maps drawn by citizens, not elected officials and that does not make us Republican or Democrat - just little “d” democrat - spelled nonpartisan - we stick to our positions. Truthfully, we get in partisan trouble more often when we choose an imperfect way of saying things, like, “We deplore the actions of the XYZ Administration with regard to climate change.” We are not commenting on the “D-ness” or “R-ness” of the elected official, but at times are taking perhaps an ill-advised shortcut in leading with our dismay rather than our position. Isn’t communication a work in progress!

Our LWVMD DEI statement concludes by saying, “Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.” Our DEI principle is an inseparable part of our democracy work. If you don’t believe that more perfection is possible you won’t be very effective. Thank you for being a believing League member!

~ Richard Willson, Co-President

Now Available: State Board of Elections’ Report on Maryland’s General Election

The Maryland State Board of Elections has released its final report on Maryland’s 2020 general election, which will be of great interest to many League members. The report begins with a complete description of the history and organization of the November 3 election and continues with sections on various aspects of the election including vote by mail, early voting and election day voting. Statewide efforts in voter education and voter support (call center and electronic support) are also included. Additional election reports and election-related statistics are also available on the Board’s website.

~ Barbara Crain, Voter Services

February State Board Meeting Highlights

- The board performed its quarterly review of League finances. We are pleased to have three months of cash reserves in liquidity.
- The Personnel Committee reported on their progress in the search for a new State Director.
- Topics to cover at the Convention were discussed. The adoption of bylaws for our C4 needs a place on the agenda. Sharon Campbell will do some inquiries about successful approaches to a gathering of 150 or so attendees. The figure of $10 was well received as the “right” registration charge. One suggestion was to fundraise separately to cover any speaker honorariums. Using breakout rooms, though they would incur extra cost for one month, would help build relationships among participants.
• The DEI committee will be focusing on goal setting at their next bi-weekly meeting.

Summarized by Lois Hybl

Program Report for February

• Program Planning reports are trickling in. Due date for submission was February 26. Thanks to all the local Leagues who have already submitted their reports. I will present a report at the March Board meeting.

• The Initiative Study Committee has had several requests to help with Local League presentations. We have been happy to fill those requests. Any League looking for a presenter from the committee, please let me know. Initiative Study Consensus reports are due on April 16th. Eapter@lwvmd.org

~ Elaine Apter, Program Chair

League Advocates Pursue Our Legislative Priorities

The Legislative Session is almost at the halfway point. March 8th is the last day to introduce a bill. March 22nd is “Crossover” day, or the last day by which a bill must have been approved by at least one of the two chambers.

We entered this session with an increased emphasis on advocacy, and a more focused set of priorities. Our overarching priorities were: 1) Making Democracy Work; 2) Social and Economic Justice; and 3) Protecting the Environment. To date we have testified on over 65 bills! In several cases we testified in person, often at the request of a bill sponsor. We have also kept a running blog consisting of both issues papers and updates.

We have been busiest in those areas we designated as having a Leading Role: Redistricting Reform and Protecting the Right to Vote. We strongly supported the successful effort to override the Governor’s veto of The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (aka Kirwan Commission). We will continue to press hard as part of a coalition for much needed improvement around police accountability. Our work on redistricting will speed up once the session is over.

Our thanks go out to the many league members involved as advocates for our positions.

~ Submitted by Lois Hybl
Deadline of March 7th to Recommend Teachers for Case Method Institute

In 2015, Harvard Business School launched the Case Method Project, a unique pilot that aimed to discover whether the case method might enable high school students to train for active citizenship in the same way MBA candidates train for leadership in business. Since 2015, the Project has worked with hundreds of high school teachers across the country to incorporate cases from the popular Harvard course “History of American Democracy” into their US history, government, and civics classes. As of July 1, 2020, the project shifted operations to a new, independent non-profit, the Case Method Institute for Education and Democracy, as it begins to scale beyond its pilot program.

Participating in the Case Method Institute’s program is a transformative experience for any high school U.S. History or Government teacher. Prof. David Moss models the Harvard Business School's method that incorporates well-researched case readings, group work guided by essential questions, and whole group discussion promoting civil discourse and deep learning. Gaining access to the twenty-one cases allows teachers to choose those that best fit their curricular goals and students' interests, including several on social justice. The method works well in virtual, hybrid, and in-person settings and prompts students to wrestle with political, economic, and cultural crises in American history in a way that instills democratic values. For anyone hoping to promote civic education in our schools, this training provides a framework for bridging the political divide and bolstering democratic practices.

This unique and exciting program includes:

- An afternoon of live, online training with Harvard Business School Professor David Moss on Saturday, April 3, including an interactive case discussion. Professor Moss will discuss his “History of American Democracy” course and illustrate the case method teaching approach—the core pedagogy used at Harvard Business School for decades.

- A full curriculum of Harvard cases free of cost from “History of American Democracy.”

- An 8-hour asynchronous training program completed before the Zoom-based session with Professor Moss, where participants will become familiar with case method teaching.

- A certificate from the Institute detailing 32 hours of professional development, delivered upon successful completion of the course and related training and implementation.

If your League is planning to nominate teachers for the April workshop, please let Deirdre Kamlani know at civics@lwvgreenwich.org by Sunday, March 7th.

Feel free to contact me with questions at gmassey@lwvmd.org.

~Submitted by Genie Massey
Register Now for LWVMD Virtual Day on Capitol Hill - April 29th

LWVMD is planning another Virtual Day on Capitol Hill for Thursday, April 29. This is also the LWVUS “Day of Action” and will most likely be focused on voting rights, including the “For The People” Act (H.R.1/S.1, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act), and D.C. statehood.

As we did last year, we will use Zoom for a series of meetings with the Maryland Congressional delegation of roughly twenty minutes each, including time for us to make our pitch and engage in some question and answer with our representatives (or their staff).

Please sign up to attend this FREE member virtual event on our website.

If you have questions, please contact Jackie Coolidge: jcoolidge@schoolbench.com

We realize that our work to make a difference and affect positive change through legislation not only affects our League members and the communities, they reside in, but it affects our neighbors throughout the state of Maryland. We appreciate the dedication and the wealth of knowledge that our LWVMD members’ exhibit. They are ordinary people from various backgrounds who strive to make a difference with others who share the same common goal which is to empower citizens to shape better communities.

The 2021 LWVMD Convention Will be Held on Saturday, June 5th, Virtually!

Conventions are typically a two-day affair, so stay tuned for details on how the planning committee will propose to complete our work together without too much Zoom fatigue! You should block out the whole day on your calendars now, as we will be considering adoption of studies, election of officers, State positions, an annual budget and all with a mix of fun and education.

The chart below will provide local Leagues with the number of voting delegates as well as an overview of shifts in membership over the last four years:

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*Caroline, Dorchester & Talbot Counties