



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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STATE BOARD LETTER

Mid-February 2017

LWVMD Calendar

February

14 - Tuesday, League of Women Voters' 97th Birthday

20 - Monday, Presidents Day, LWVMD office closed

March

1 - Wednesday, LWVMD Legislative Day, see pages 3 and 10

2 - Thursday, Fracking Ban Rally, 1 – 3 p.m., Lawyers' Mall, Annapolis, see page 6

3 - Friday, LWNCA Board meeting

6 - Monday, LWVMD Board meeting, 10 a.m., Wilde Lake

9 - Thursday, *State Board Letter* deadline

April

3 - Monday, LWVMD Board meeting, 10 a.m., Wilde Lake

7 - Friday, LWNCA Board meeting

6 - Thursday, *State Board Letter* deadline

8 - Saturday, LWNCA forum on Affordable Housing, see flyer page 11

10 - Monday, General Assembly adjourns *sine die*

21 - Friday, consensus reports on Development Rights and Responsibilities Agreements Study due to LWVMD

26 - Wednesday, LWVMD Lobby Day on Capitol Hill, see flyer page 12

LWVMD Is Going to College!

Mark your calendars for our biennial convention, which will be held **June 9 – 11, 2017 at Washington College in Chestertown, on beautiful Maryland's Eastern Shore**. The Kent County League will host this event. We are thrilled that Sheila Bair, President of Washington College, former chair of the U.S. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and author of *Bull by the Horns: Fighting to Save Main Street from Wall St. and Wall St. from Itself*, will be our keynote speaker at Saturday night's banquet,

We will "own" an entire dorm for the weekend, and will be able to take advantage of the excellent food service at the college, as well as nifty meeting spaces – all at an affordable price for attendees. Be reminded, though, that of course a dorm is different than a hotel: we will have to make up our own beds and share a bath with our suite-mate or suite-mates.



Be looking in the next *State Board Letter* for information about registering and choosing your "fun" activity for Friday evening. And, see page 7 of this *State Board Letter* to start preparing for convention!

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE



February seems like such a boring month. In astrology, it is represented by a fish. It's usually a cold month with too many more weeks of bad weather conditions that sometimes inconvenience us. While February 2017 has been unusually warm in Maryland, elsewhere there have been tragic floods, frigid temperatures, and snow or rain in abundance. Most years we spend this month looking forward to March and the promise of spring. But perhaps we should reconsider.

February is Black History month, when we celebrate such Americans as Ida B. Wells, a founder of the NAACP and journalist who chronicled in scathing terms the history of mistreatment of Black Americans. The Ida B. Wells award is conferred by the National Association of Black Journalists and the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University to journalists who have worked to increase opportunities for Black journalists.

We celebrate Valentine's Day, established on February 14th because, it is alleged, this is the day when birds traditionally begin to find their mates for the spring season. There are many references to various stories of Saints Valentine from which one

can pick the story one prefers. The tradition of sending valentine cards seems to have originated in England in the mid-18th century.

For League members, February 14th is the anniversary of our founding, our 97th birthday this year. Thanks to Carrie Chapman Catt we have a strong organization with the purpose of intelligent voting. To that end we have maintained our nonpartisanship, providing voters with information about candidates in the candidates own words.

The pictures of Mrs. Catt most often available make her look like someone from two centuries ago, when in fact she lived until March 1947, was a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, and became a peace activist in her later years. In 1933 she sent to Adolph Hitler a letter from the Protest Committee of Non-Jewish Women Against the Persecution of Jews in Germany and continually campaigned for the admittance of Jews to the United States who were being persecuted in Europe. She was also a staunch supporter of the United Nations.

Perhaps we should re-evaluate our misgivings about February when there is so much to celebrate. Nevertheless, we will no doubt still look forward to spring.

In League,

Barbara Schnackenberg and Nancy Soreng
LWVMD Co-Presidents

Voter Registrars Needed at Naturalization Ceremonies

Volunteers are needed **to register new voters at naturalization ceremonies** held at U.S. courthouses in Baltimore and Greenbelt and also at the Immigration Service office in Baltimore. Ceremonies are held once each month at the Greenbelt courthouse, twice each month at the Baltimore courthouse, and twice daily at the Immigration Service office, but the League is responsible for only one week each month. Please contact Ralph Watkins - ralph.watkins1@verizon.net - to be added to the list of volunteers for these events; you will receive an email with notice of the times that volunteers are needed and you can respond with the times that work for you.

LWVMD Board Meeting Highlights, February 6, 2017

LWVMD

- **Administrative Director Position:** Board voted to approve Administrative Director position title and job description as presented to the Board.
- **Nationbuilder Cost;** Board voted to pay in advance for a year of NationBuilder, thereby saving 35%.
- **Bylaws Changes** Board voted to change the following LWVMD Bylaws to conform to the LWVUS Bylaws that were adopted at the 2016 LWVUS convention.
 - **Section 1, Eligibility.** Any ~~citizen~~ **person** who subscribes to the purposes and policy of the LWVUS shall be eligible for membership.
 - **Section 2, Types of Membership.** The membership of the League shall be composed of voting members and associate members. . . . **Voting members.** Persons at least ~~48~~ **16** years of age who join the League shall be voting members of the LWVUS, the LWVMD, the local League to which the member belongs, and any regional League to which that local League belongs.
- **State Convention:** Board voted to set the costs for those participating in the State Convention.

LWVMD-Education Fund

- LWVMD-EF will again apply for a LWVUS grant for voter registration.
- The need to update the pamphlet *Welcome New Voter* was also discussed.

Elaine Apter, LWVMD Director

Legislative Day March 1

This will be an exciting year in Annapolis and there will be a lot to learn during Legislative Day on March 1. Visiting legislators can begin as early as 8:30 a.m. Our program will begin at 10 a.m. and end after lunch at 1 p.m.; please see the attached flyer, page 10, for more information about our day. **Toni Holness**, the public policy director of the ACLU of Maryland, will be our luncheon speaker. She will discuss corrections and sentencing reform, one of our legislative priorities this year.

This year LWVMD has set the following priorities for lobbying the General Assembly:

- Redistricting reform
- Improved voter access
- Mitigating climate change
- Reliance on clean renewable energy
- Safe water for all
- Maintaining the safety net for vulnerable populations
- Corrections and sentencing reform
- Adequate public transportation funding



The registration fee is \$35 and includes morning coffee and breakfast foods and lunch. If you have any questions, contact me at ruth@cramercrystal.com.

Ruth Crystal, LWVMD 2nd VP and Action Chair

Have a Question about a Legislative Topic the League is Following?

Each year the state League, with input from local Leagues, identifies our legislative priorities (see above); you can also find these under the “Advocacy” tab on the state League Website: lwvmd.org. The LWVMD follows legislation that is introduced on these and many other issues during the state legislative session. You can read about these bills in *Report from State Circle* (RSC) – published 6 times during the 90-day state legislative session and available on our Website under the “publications” tab. Some of these bills we support or oppose, based on a state or national League consensus positions, and we may submit oral or written testimony to legislative committees on these. You can read the testimony under the “Advocacy” tab on the Website.

Twenty League members are RSC reporters – these are our “experts,” and they closely follow bills and write testimony on their areas of expertise for RSC. If you have questions on specific pieces of legislation, the respective RSC reporter may be the person to ask. Our 2017 reporters, their email addresses, and the areas they follow are:

<u>Government</u>		
Election process	Lu Pierson	lu.pierson@verizon.net
Juvenile corrections	Judy Morenoff	morenoffj@aol.com
Administration of justice	Marlene Cohn	marlenekc@verizon.net
Police accountability	Marlene Cohn	marlenekc@verizon.net
Corrections	Marlene Cohn	marlenekc@verizon.net
Campaign finance	Nancy Soreng	nsoreng@comcast.net
Fire arms control	Doreen Rosenthal	doreen.rosenthal@gmail.com
Transparency in government	Barbara Schnackenberg	baschnack@verizon.net
Redistricting	Ashley Oleson	ash.lizabeth13@gmail.com
Ethics	Betsy Sexton	esexton2009@gmail.com
State budget & taxes	Barbara Hankins	barbara@hankins.net
State revenue	Barbara Hankins	barbara@handkins.net
<u>Social policy</u>		
Education	Lois Hybl	lhybl@verizon.net
Health care	Neilson Andrews	nandrews39@verizon.net
Equality of opportunity	Ruth Crystal	ruth@cramercrystal.com
Meeting basic human needs	Ruth Crystal	ruth@cramercrystal.com
Drug abuse	Chris Hager	econchris@earthlink.net
Human trafficking	Deborah Mitchell	damitchell_inc@yahoo.com
Children's services	Judy Morenoff	morenoffj@aol.com
Domestic violence	Sandra Raviv	sandraraviv@gmail.com
<u>Natural resources</u>		
Fracking	Ruth Alice White	ruth.folkfan@gmail.com
Renewable energy	Betsy Singer	elizabethsinger446@hotmail.com
Climate change	Betsy Singer	elizabethsinger446@hotmail.com
All other environmental issues	Linda Silversmith	linsil@usermail.com
Transportation	Bee Ditzler	bditzle@yahoo.com
Land use	Susan Cochran	suzanwc@verizon.net

Ruth Crystal, LWVMD 2nd VP and Action Chair

Adequacy of Education Funding in Maryland: Comparing Current K-12 Public Education Funding Formulas to Recommendations of Researchers



In the first *Report from State Circle*, I described the Governor's appropriations for K-12 education for FY2018. True, he fully funded education under the current state education funding law, the Bridge to Excellence Act of 2002. However, researchers have made new recommendations for adequate funding to meet the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) standards. In December 2016, the consultants Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA) presented their recommendations to the new Commission for Innovation and Excellence in Education (the Kirwan Commission) that will take APA's study, get additional public input, and make recommendations about any changes to the formula in their **final report, due December 2017**.

The current formula guarantees a basic per pupil foundation amount that is shared by the state and local districts. Wealthier districts get less per pupil from the state. Weights are added to the per pupil foundation to provide more for low-income (Compensatory Education), special education, and limited English proficiency students. The per-pupil foundation is \$6,964 for FY2017 and \$7,011 for FY2018. The following table compares the FY2017 formula with the proposed foundation and weights. There is added weight for Pre-K because of the recommendation that it be universally available for 4-year-olds, but not required.

Current FY2017 Formula	Proposed Formula
Base or Foundation	\$6,964
Compensatory Education	.97
Limited English Proficiency	.35
Special Education	.99
Pre-Kindergarten	.74
	.29

The consultants also recommended changing the way a county's wealth is calculated. Instead of adding the value of a county's net taxable income (NTI), and real and personal property, the property value would be multiplied by the ratio of the county's NTI to the state's total NTI. The recommendations also remove minimum guarantees of state funding for wealthier counties to free up funds to improve equity. Thus, three counties would be considered able to provide funding without state aid – certain to cause controversy as the Kirwan Commission reacts to these recommendations.

The total additional cost of APA's recommendations would be \$2.9 billion with the state contributing \$1.9 billion and local districts an additional \$.7 billion.

Instead of special grants for declining enrollment, the school system could use the higher of current enrollment or the average of the previous three year's enrollment.

Some other recommendations are likely to cause controversy. A **Comparable Wage Index (CWI) would replace the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI)**. The CWI looks at salaries of professionals comparable to teachers by regions within (continued next page)

the state to assess what teachers in a certain county would need to be paid. Counties that fall below the state average "cost of living" would have funding reduced to account for the lower costs in their counties. Requiring collection of alternate forms to determine family income for students eligible for compensatory education is also controversial. Some education advocates, such as the ACLU, do not feel that the proposals adequately address concentrated poverty. Many think that **50 percent or greater poverty in a school** requires additional resources. For example, the community schools model provides wrap-around services and additional staff to support low-income students and connect families to resources. Many advocates would also like to see funding for low-income birth-to-three and three-year-old programs.

Other areas not covered were: the **Guaranteed Tax Base program** (which helps low-wealth jurisdictions that devote higher amounts to their school systems); student **transportation funding**; how the state education funding formula should deal with **Tax Increment Financing (TIF)**; differences in school facility operation and maintenance costs between those with newer or older buildings; and school safety/police costs.

For the whole adequacy report, go to www.marylandpublicschools.org and click on [Study of Adequacy of Funding for Education in the State Of Maryland](#).

While legislators won't deal with these suggested formula changes and the structural deficit until the 2018 session, they are currently faced with legislation changing standards for charter schools, increasing funding for the current BOOST program that provides scholarships to students for private and parochial schools as well as other proposed voucher-type legislation. The League is opposed to vouchers and other state aid to private and religious schools.

Lois Hybl, LWVMD Board and Advocacy Team (Education)

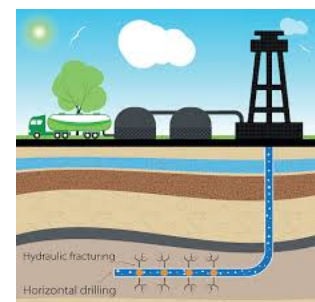
ACTION Heating Up on Fracking Ban: Rally March 2 in Annapolis Lawyers Mall, 1 - 3 p.m.

LWVMD continues to have serious concerns about the impact of fracking on the environment, water supplies, and the health of families and workers in communities where fracking is allowed. These concerns are why **we are supporting SB 740 and HB 1325 to ban fracking in Maryland.**

In 2015, we supported a moratorium on fracking in Maryland, and that moratorium is due to expire in October 2017. After that time, under final regulations, permits can be issued unless legislators vote to ban fracking for natural gas in this legislative session.

During the moratorium period, the evidence of harm from fracking has grown. The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health released two new large-scale studies showing significant associations between fracking and both preterm births and asthma attacks and an increase in migraines, fatigue and chronic nasal and sinus problems. Pennsylvania researchers have shown more hospital admissions for cardiac and neurologic ailments in two counties with active fracking operations, compared with a neighboring county where fracking was banned.

Fracking is exempt from many federal and environmental and safety regulations. Regulations don't solve two of the most dangerous features of fracking: (continued next page)



well leakage of toxic chemicals and methane into water wells, underground aquifers, and the air; and the disposal of millions of gallons of water contaminated with toxic chemicals and radioactive waste.

Jobs that come with fracking are often temporary and go to skilled labor with drilling experience and to truckers. Right now, Garrett County in Western Maryland on the Marcellus Shale is home to a thriving ecotourism and second-home economy that would be jeopardized by local fracking operations.

Call your legislators to voice your support for SB 740 in the Education, Health and the Environment Committee (hearing date Feb. 28 at 1 p.m.) and HB1325 in the Environment and Transportation Committee. Both bills prohibit hydraulic fracking in Maryland.

LWVMD belongs to the Don't Frack Maryland Coalition. Don't Frack Maryland brings together a diverse group of more than 100 public interest organizations, labor groups, businesses, and faith communities from across Maryland. To sign up for the rally on March 2 and bus transportation, go to <http://www.dontfrackmd.org/march/>

Betsy Singer, LWVMD Board and Advocacy Team, Environment

Getting Ready for Convention, June 2017

LWVMD Program Planning Process

Each local League has the chance to weigh in on areas of Program Study you would like to see the state League focus on for the next biennium. Local League recommendations are reviewed by the LWVMD Board and are used to craft program recommendations that will be presented to the delegates at state convention 2017. After this initial review local Leagues will have an opportunity to evaluate those board recommendations and submit suggestions for changes to the LWVMD Board prior to convention. Local Leagues can also submit non-recommended program items at the convention. There are two parts to Program Planning for LWVMD. Part I is review of the current League positions (found in the 2016-2017 Study and Action Book) and Part 2 is Proposals for New Studies. LWVMD has sent local League Presidents the 2017-2019 Program Planning materials and timetable to assist them in conducting state Program Planning meetings.

We look forward to hearing about your recommendations for updates of positions and ideas for a study or informational forum. Please send completed reports to both LWVMD@verizon.net, and JoAnn Ross, LWVMD Program Director, jross.clemens@gmail.com, who will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Call for Nominations to the State League (LWVMD) Board



Our State League Nominating Committee is happy to accept names of League members for consideration to serve on the State Board for two-year terms beginning July 1, 2017. The slate will be presented and voted on at our State Convention June 9-11 at Washington College in Chestertown. It is fine to submit your own name if you are interested in serving. Please contact Nominating Committee Chair Betsy Sexton: 410-821-5014; email: esexton2009@gmail.com.

Nominating Committee members are: Betsy Sexton, Chair (Baltimore County), Rebecca Goode (Kent County), Betsy Grater (Howard County), Andrea Gruhl (Howard County), Anne Mychalus (Calvert County)

LWVUS Responses to Current Topics in the News: Supreme Court Justice Nomination and Illegal Immigration

Supreme Court Nominee

To: Members of the U.S. Senate
From: Chris Carson, President, League of Women Voters of the United States
Re: **Three Questions for the Supreme Court Nominee**

The Supreme Court nominee President Trump announced this week (on January 31) will play a major role in setting the course for American democracy over the coming decades. That may seem like an exaggeration, but the Supreme Court is currently divided four to four on most major issues. The incoming justice will ultimately be the deciding vote on crucial issues that shape the direction of our system of government and our country.

The League of Women Voters believes that any Supreme Court nominee should share his or her views on fundamental issues. We have three questions for a nominee:

- 1. Must the Executive Branch obey court orders from the federal judicial system?**
Our system of checks and balances is the basic tenet of a free democracy. To prevent authoritarianism, the Founders made sure that no one branch of the government could dominate the others. But in recent days, it appears that the Executive Branch is challenging that system by refusing to obey federal court orders limiting President Trump's anti-immigration policies. The Supreme Court nominee must take a stand, one way or the other, on the role of federal courts in our system of government.
- 2. What is the appropriate role for voting rights in our democracy?** Our nation was founded on a belief that voters should be in charge of our government rather than government being in charge of the voters. However imperfect at the beginning, citizen voting rights have grown through constitutional amendments to include women, racial and ethnic minorities and young people. But we are seeing efforts to roll back voting rights, with laws designed to make it more difficult for people to exercise their right to vote. The Supreme Court nominee should let the American people know his or position, whether voting rights enforcement is a vital component of our representative democracy or if the nominee thinks limitations can be justified under our Constitution.
- 3. Is big money in politics a fundamental part of our electoral system, or can limits sometimes be justified?** Some believe that corporations, unions, organizations and individuals should be able to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence elections, and to do so secretly. Others see this as an existential threat to our democracy. The Supreme Court nominee should state his beliefs related to the influence of money in our elections.

Judicial nominees should not be required to tell us how they will decide future cases, but they should share with the public the basic principles they support or oppose. For the Senate to carry out its constitutional duty to advise and consent on judicial (continued next page)

nominees, truthful answers about basic principles are required. A presidential nomination is not a blank check. The Constitution requires the Senate to do its duty.

The League of Women Voters urges the Senate to explore these three fundamental questions with any nominee before voting to confirm or reject the next Supreme Court justice.

The League Is Opposed To Deportation Of Non-Criminal Undocumented Immigrants.

The LWV supports cities, towns, counties, and states that make a decision not to cooperate with federal deportation and enforcement actions that include non-criminal undocumented immigrants. Moreover, the Trump Administration's orders are of dubious legality.

It is simply wrong, and a perversion of the American system of justice, for the Executive Branch to refuse to obey federal court orders.

The LWV is opposed to discrimination, including discrimination in immigration, based on religion. The Trump Administration's orders appear to be targeted at Muslims and immigrants from majority-Muslim nations.

We would like to remind all our members that we are faced with many challenges to our positions and the League is involved in serious efforts to address them. Among these, we spent last weekend anticipating the issuance of an Executive Order investigating "voter fraud." We continue to monitor this situation and are ready to issue a statement if that occurs. We also continue our efforts to lobby on ACA in Congress. Everybody in the country is scrambling to keep up.



Chris Carson, President/Chair
League of Women Voters of the United States
League of Women Voters Education Fund
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Facebook: @leagueofwomenvoters Twitter: @LWV www.lwv.org | Making Democracy Work™
| www.VOTE411.org



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND

LEGISLATIVE DAY

Wednesday, March 1, 2017

Miller Senate Office Building President's
Conference Room, West Wing
11 Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD



Registration fee: \$35 - GUESTS ARE WELCOME

Includes buffet lunch Parking not included

Photo ID required for admission to all Maryland government buildings.

- 8:30am Registration and Coffee
- 8:30 -10am Visits to Legislators arranged by Local Leagues
Local Leagues are responsible for making those appointments in advance.
- 8:40 -10am Optional tour of Legislative complex
- 10:00am Report on legislative visits
- 10:15am Discussion of proposed legislation impacting the League's legislative priorities
- 11am State budget presentation by Warren Deschenaux, Executive Director
Department of Legislative Services
- 11:45am Discussion of impact of budget on our legislative priorities
- Noon Lunch - Speaker: Toni Holness, public policy director, ACLU will speak on
corrections and sentencing reforms
- 1pm Optional visits to committee hearings

LEGISLATIVE DAY 2017 REGISTRATION FORM

If you or someone you know would like assistance from the Lois Stoner Scholarship Fund for the workshop fee, please contact the LWVMD office.

(Deadline for Registration - Tuesday, February 21, 2017)

NAME _____

LEAGUE _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Registration fee - \$35 _____ Donation to the LWVMD Education Fund _____

Or donate online: Go to http://www.lwvmd.org/join_donate

Mail to: LWVMD, 111 Cathedral Street, Suite 201, Annapolis, MD 21401 Or

register online: http://www.lwvmd.org/legislative_day_20



**League of Women Voters of the
National Capital Area**

presents

***A Place to Call Home:
Affordable Housing Forum***

**What are the Challenges?
How are They Being Addressed?
What Can We Do to Help?**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 2017
9:30am - 3pm**

**NRECA – National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
4301 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, Virginia 22203**

Member Leagues

LWV of the District of Columbia

**LWV of Frederick County, Howard County, Prince George's
County and Montgomery County**

**LWV of Arlington County, Fairfax Area, Falls Church and Loudoun
County**



Join Maryland Leaguers for



A DAY ON CAPITOL HILL

Wednesday, April 26, 2017 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

- ✓ Visit at US Senate and Representative offices
- ✓ Enjoy lunch together in staff dining facility
- ✓ Take part in advocating a LWVUS topic* (voluntary)
- ✓ Have fun!

*Participants will be briefed by email about the LWVUS topic for advocacy.



No fee!

Meet at Taxi/Massachusetts Avenue exit of Union Station, Washington, DC at 10 a.m. wearing walking shoes.

Arrive at Union Station by Amtrak, Marc, Metro, bus or auto. If driving, one can park in Union Station's public parking.

For questions, contact Carole Conors, 410-750-3960 home, 443-794-4678

mobile or CaroleConors@verizon.net. To reserve, contact Carole by email or LWVMD office at LWVMD@verizon.net by Monday, April 10, and include street address, email address and cell phone number.

Name(s) _____ Cell phone # _____

Email _____ Street address (not PO Box) _____