



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND, INC.

111 Cathedral, Suite 201, Annapolis MD 21401
Tel. 410-269-0232 and fax (call first)

E-mail: lwvmd@verizon.net

Co-Presidents: Elaine Apter and Richard Willson

Online: lwvmd.org

Twitter: [@LWVMD](https://twitter.com/LWVMD)

Facebook: [lwvmd](https://www.facebook.com/lwvmd)

SBL Editor: Liz Demulling

edemulling@lwvmd.org

STATE BOARD LETTER

Mid-November 2017

LWVMD Calendar

November

23 – Thursday, Thanksgiving, Office closed

24 – Friday, Office closed

December

04 – Monday, LWVMD Board Meeting, FELC, 10am

15 – Friday, Bill of Rights Day

Planning your local league calendar? Click [here](#) to see the whole 2017-2018 calendar.

Presidents' Message



Only a holiday or two now separate us from 2018 - an election year! As Elections approach our League work shifts subtly from policy advocacy and voter registration to other important forms of voter service like voters' guides and public forums. As a League member, elections bring you the quandary of choices on how you should act publicly. Will you work to support a specific candidate in the coming season or will you

be focused on voter registration and conducting forums?

League leaders have to make this tough choice in favor of non-partisan involvement exclusively. No central committee picnics for us! To protect the League's reputation as a non-partisan organization those in leadership positions have to skip the "party"! As one of my mentors advised, if it could be made to look bad in the paper, don't do it!

The League of Women Voters of Washington County has lost a couple of members recently. Let me tell you why this is good news: As one member wrote, "I am helping to actively recruit and support candidates. I would not want your process to be questioned down the road because I was

included” in your forum preparations. Isn’t this the perfect response?!

So what will **you** be doing this election season? Have you called your local league president to volunteer your time? Surprise someone and step forward without being asked! Whether you pick a partisan role or a league role, Making Democracy Work ® is **our** job.

In League,
Richard Willson
LWVMD Co-President
pres@lwvmd.org

My Experience Participating in a Study Group as a Newbie

“What did I get myself into?” I thought, after I had volunteered to serve on the LWVMD Primary Election Study Committee. I was brand-new to the League and didn’t know anything about it, other than it had something to do with women and voting (hey, I’m a woman and I vote, so I belong!) One of the first things that I learned when I joined, to my delight, is that LWV members include men as well as women!

I had joined the LWV because I desperately want to do something about our dysfunctional, partisan government, and thought that one thing that might affect partisan / bi-partisanship is the election system. What better place to look into election systems than the League of Women Voters?!

October Board Meeting

The Fundraising Letter was a success. The Board extends their thanks to all who donated. Projects we are working on now include the Winter Workshop, Spring Fundraiser and Legislative Day in Annapolis. Our Action groups are off to a good start and will be lobbying during the Legislative Session. Members have been actively working on our Studies for the year and we have developed our list of Legislative and Budget Priorities. Keep in mind that the State Board is there to help you and your Local League meet their goals.

Theresa Frelich,
LWVMD Secretary
secretary@lwvmd.org



I was just getting my feet wet when I found out that there was a committee to study the primary election system, so I took a big breath and asked if I could join. I was surprised (and a little scared!) that they accepted someone as new as I was.

That was just over a year ago, and I’m so very glad that I took the plunge. Without any exceptions, the committee members respected me and took me seriously – even saying that my naiveté gave them the advantage of having the materials reviewed by someone who was not steeped in the culture and was not afraid to say that she didn’t know what this or that was about.

And OH! How much I learned! I still am naïve about the LWV process (committee leaders and members help me along with

that), but I learned a LOT about the election systems, delved into research about their effect on partisanship as well as citizen engagement and disenfranchisement, minority representation, and many other useful and fascinating subjects.

The committee work was quite manageable, meeting by phone once every month or so, and accepting assignments as I was able to do so.

But one of the greatest benefits of being on the committee was engaging with such thoughtful, insightful, understanding, patient, knowledgeable and respectful people, everyone working together to get all perspectives fairly represented in our report.

I will never again hesitate if given an opportunity to work on a LWV committee!

Dona Sauerburger,
Member, Primary Study

LWVNCA Joins *Metro – Fund It/Fix It* Campaign

The League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area ([LWVNCA](#)) is made up of the state Leagues of Virginia and Maryland, the League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia, the local Maryland Leagues of Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's; and the local Virginia Leagues of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Falls Church. In the Fall of 2016 the LWVNCA Board voted to adopt Metro Funding as an advocacy priority and they appointed Edith Holmes Snyder from Virginia and I to co-chair an Action Committee.



We began to research whether any other organizations were working on this issue and discovered that the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG) was convening a coalition called *Fund It/Fix It*. This coalition is focusing on grass roots advocacy to call for a dedicated, bondable and sustainable funding source for Metro. Metro is about \$500 million short of what it needs to operate on an annual basis if the various jurisdictions continue to make the same payments to the system that they have been making. A wealth of information on the topic, along with the presentations given at the Metro Funding Forum that was hosted by LWVNCA and CSG, can be found on the [LWVNCA Fund It/Fix It](#) site.

If there is no more money, there will either be fare increases or a reduction in service. Either action could head Metro into a “death spiral.” So, there is an urgent need to get more funding for Metro, but no one agrees on how that should happen.

Several proposals are floating around including a regional sales tax, increased property tax on property near Metro Stations, or creating a dedicated fund within the states' transportation trust funds – but none of these options are particularly appealing to any of the involved jurisdictions. On November 7, we met with Ray LaHood, former federal transportation secretary, who was hired by Governor McAuliffe to produce a report on the topic. This report has not been released but he shared some of his key findings. He believes that each jurisdiction will have to come up

with their own funding plan. Also, the federal government should be contributing more. An analysis of labor costs showed that what Metro pays is in line with other systems in the nation. A smaller governing Board should be put in place temporarily to streamline decision making.

We will be meeting with Maryland legislators to learn about their perspectives on the topic and remind them that a well-functioning Metro system provides significant economic, environmental and quality of life benefits to the entire state. If opportunities for advocacy by our members arise, we will let you know via Action Alerts and further articles in League publications.

Nancy Soreng,
Metro Action Committee Co-Chair

Train to Chicago

For members who are interested in attending the LWVUS Convention in Chicago in 2018, there is a train option available. See the details in the [October 2017 State Board Letter](#).



This trip is open to anyone. To qualify for a group rate, a commitment is needed by at least 14 people by

November 26 and payment of \$570*. This payment would cover the round trip in a roomette, meals during travel, and transportation from the train station to the hotel and return.

There are also coach seats available for about \$200*, and would also cover transportation to and from hotel. You would have to purchase the meals, which are served at the seat.

This is not a fund raising activity.

Feel free to contact me with any questions either by e-mail or phone:

Carolyn Hetterick, Treasurer, LWVMD
treasurer@lwvmd.org or 410-935-5925

*This is not the final price, it is the maximum. The cost will decrease with a group rate.

Carolyn Hetterick,
LWVMD Treasurer
treasurer@lwvmd.org

Legislative Priorities for 2018 General Assembly

Our goals fall in the following three categories:

Making Democracy Work:

- Redistricting Reform
- Improved Voter Access & Security of Election Processes

Protecting the Environment:

- Mitigating Climate Change
- Increasing Use of Clean Renewable Energy
- Ensuring Safe Water and Clean Waterways For All

Promoting Social and Economic Justice:

- Maintaining the Safety Net for Vulnerable Populations
- Providing Adequate And Equitable Pre-K – 12 Public Education
- Providing Adequate Public Transportation
- Corrections and Sentencing Reform

Leagues who submitted your suggested priorities. Many specific suggestions fall under the broader categories listed. We will strengthen our efforts to either provide written and/or oral testimony or issue Action Alerts on legislation reflecting these issues.

Lois Hybl,
LWVMD Vice President
VPI@lwvmd.org

The LWVMD Board approved these priorities on November 6. Thanks to all local

Focus on a Local League

Calvert County Engages Students in Voting History

The Calvert County LWV is always looking for new ways to get Calvert citizens interested in and informed on government. A new project launched this year hopes to bring students closer to an understanding of historical obstacles to voting, and the significance of voter access. Middle and high school students in Calvert County have a proud record of creating top-notch History Fair projects in honor of [National History Day](#). National History Day is a highly regarded academic program for secondary students. Students conduct months of extensive primary and secondary research of historical topics related to an annual theme. This year the national History Fair theme is *Conflict and Compromise in History*.



Voting – a right and responsibility of citizens as well as a core value of the League of Women Voters – has been fraught with conflict and compromise since our country began. So, this year the Calvert County LWV is sponsoring awards for middle and high school students for the best History Fair projects that focus on Conflict and Compromise in Voting.

Eligible projects could explore, for example, the decisions about voting that were made when our country was founded, emancipation and voting by African-American citizens, the 1920 passage of the 19th amendment enabling women the right to vote, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, gerrymandered voting districts, and much more. The Calvert LWV is looking forward to seeing the submissions and hopes to enjoy making this academic competition a tradition for future National History Day Fairs.

Margaret Dunkle,
LWV Calvert County, 2nd Vice President

Program Update

Work continues on each of four studies adopted at this year's convention. The *Death*

with Dignity study now has a chair and has added several members to the study group which resulted in a broader representation of the state. The group feels it has a handle on

how to ensure they present a balanced study. Work has been divided into research areas.

The *Civic Education* group has had difficulty establishing regular communication and in the division of work. A conference call after Thanksgiving will be important in confirming direction of the study and division of the work.

Senior Services concentrated on nutrition initially, and is now looking at services within counties with local Leagues to facilitate obtaining local data.



The *Corrections and Bail* group feels they have enough research to begin compiling a Facts Sheet. This

group has also added new members.

With the approaching holidays work may slow until after the first of the year. Any member who has interest in any of these topics should contact [Melanie Cox](#). All groups are communicating via conference



call versus trying to meet in person which makes it easier to participate. There is much work to be done for all four studies and representation across

the State will help to ensure the best studies possible.

Melanie Cox,
LWVMD – Programs
mcox@lwvmd.org

Kirwan Delay Disappoints Advocates

The Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (better known as the Kirwan Commission) was mandated by [HB 999](#) in the 2016 General Assembly to review the findings of a consultant's Study on Adequacy of Funding for Education in the State of Maryland. The Commission was formed to "provide recommendations on preparing students to meet the challenges of a changing global economy, to meet the State's workforce needs, to be prepared for postsecondary education and the workforce, and to be successful citizens in the 21st century." The report was due December 15, 2017.

LWVMD is a member of the [Maryland Education Coalition](#) (MEC) which expressed disappointment when the commission announced that its report would be delayed. At least one of the reasons expressed was inadequate time to calculate the costs of the Commission's recommendation or devise a method to budget them.

While advocates agree that the report is important and should be highly accurate, the delay cannot be blamed on lack of community support. Auditoriums were packed and 60 speakers signed up in both the Baltimore City and Prince George's County hearings. The Frederick hearing, where the League testified, was almost as crowded. Considering the short public notice, the Eastern Shore hearing had a significant number of speakers. At all hearings I heard common themes of schools and teachers needing extra resources and training to deal with increased

poverty and students with limited English language proficiency. Homelessness, violence in the home, and community and human trafficking were contributing to trauma experienced by students. Even teachers from more affluent counties reported less mentoring of new teachers.

MEC's statement emphasized that the delay in updating the Thornton formula has caused an "Adequacy Gap" because of inflation, increased health care costs, etc., and increased requirements for students to pass new assessments. This has resulted in significant cuts in staffing, programs or student services. Lack of a new funding formula delays improvements or increases in pre-K, community schools, student services, advanced courses and much more.

Advocates are hoping for some intermediate action in the 2018 General Assembly.

Lois Hybl,
LWVMD Vice President
VPI@lwvmd.org

LWVMD Young Professionals Volunteer Program

LWVMD's inaugural Young Professionals Policy Program is now underway. We are proud to announce that three professionals have joined our ranks in this structured volunteer program to learn more about educating voters on issues, and policy advocacy with LWVMD. (Look for introductions to these participants in your next issue of SBL.)

Our participants learned about this opportunity in a variety of ways, and have come from the Baltimore City and Montgomery County areas this round. They are very eager to contribute their skills and ideas to LWVMD, in addition to learning. Their League mentors are Nancy Soreng (Campaign Finance), Ruth Crystal (Meeting Basic Human Needs), and Judy Morenoff (Juvenile Justice & Children Services).

The November 9 *Report From State Circle (RSC)* meeting was the official kick-off date for this program, but our participants have already hit the ground running. The focus right now is to raise the League's voice on these issues, and start a conversation on these topics with our membership, and non-member supporters and followers. Our Young Professionals have been working with their mentors, and myself to develop online outreach messaging, and have

been starting to engage in coalition meetings on their issues.

When session begins, our Young Professionals will work closely with their mentors to track legislation in their topic area for the RSC, and to further educate citizens and raise awareness on action items as they relate to LWVMD position on the issues.

LWVMD mentors are excited to share their years of experience with these Young Professionals in a further effort to achieve the League's mission to educate the public on issues and policy. This opportunity will also enable LWVMD to do more work in online engagement and thought leadership within these issues areas.

Ashley Oleson
Administrative Director, LWVMD
stateoffice@lwvmd.org

