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STATE BOARD LETTER

March to April 2020

LWVMD Calendar

April

24 – Final Day of Online & Mail In Voter Registration & Party Affiliation Change (*extended due to COVID-19 changes to election process*)

28 – Congressional District 7's Special General Election – Same Day Voter Registration will be Available (Primarily a Mail-In Election, there will be at least one voting center in each of the counties within District 7 [click here for more details](#))

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

LWVMD Operations & Continuity of Service

Due to the COVID-19 public health crisis, LWVMD's office in Annapolis closed to the public March 16th and will remain closed until health officials declare it is safe to reopen. You can access the most up-to-date information at the Maryland Health Department's dedicated COVID-19 Outbreak Website here: <https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>

During this time, our State Director, Ashley Oleson, is working from home and will still be available to answer emails and conduct League business. You can also reach her by phone at our office number 410-269-0232 with any questions during this time.

Presidents' Message

Gosh things have changed since we last talked!

Just like that our legislative session is over, our meetings and gatherings are cancelled - even important things like elections are being postponed. If you cannot buy a mask you can download directions on how to make your own. What's next, a recipe for personal care products that you can no longer find on grocery store shelves?

Your State Board is thankful that we have the tools in place to meet and conduct the business of the League online, and have been practicing this meeting method since September, 2019. In the

The MD Health Exchange is Open

In response to the COVID-19 Health Crisis Maryland Health Connection has opened up a Special Enrollment Period from March 16 – June 15 for Marylanders who are currently uninsured. [Click here to learn more about how to get covered.](#)



first meetings a few users hit the steep part of the learning curve, but thankfully, that is behind us. We have been able to transact routine business and have even tackled strategic planning - yes, online. As a non-profit, LWVMD qualified for and obtained a [free license to G Suite](#) that enables our board members (up to 150 of us) to use Google Hangouts Meet as our online platform.

Our new bylaws already included the following item: **Section 8. Conference Telephone Call Meetings.** Board members may participate in meetings by means of conference telephone calls or similar communication equipment allowing all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other at the same time. Participation by such means shall constitute presence in person at a meeting. Such meetings shall follow the prescriptions of in-person board meetings. Notification of conference call meetings must be in a timely manner. If your local league does not have that provision, now is the time!

Oh, how can you amend your bylaws when your annual meetings will have to be cancelled, you say? Your local leaders are having the same conversation that we are having at the State Board level and our answer is taking shape: Online. (Unless you are buying or selling property, my recommendation is to hold online votes and affirm actions taken in this manner once you are able to reestablish in person meetings. Our work is too important and must go on.) We have a committee planning an online Council option and the good news is that potentially more people will be able to attend than we could afford to host in one physical location! We hope to feature a guest speaker who doesn't even have to live anywhere near Maryland and the same parameters apply to our panels and any entertainment.

Because we have already made the G Suite connection, we are able to offer it as a solution to you in your local League work. Your email to online@lwwmd.org will go to the members of the Online Services Committee which has been tasked with moving fast to catalogue the best solutions and support. I serve on that group and we'd love to have your local League leaders share what works best and where you need support. Who knows, a bulk purchase of ear buds or webcams may be in our future as well!

Elsewhere in this SBL newsletter you will see the details of the State Board's purchase of a Zoom license so that we can host webinars and larger meetings. Stay tuned!

Democracy work does not take a pause, though creativity may be required of us all.

Richard Willson and Lois Hybl - Co-Presidents
pres@lwwmd.org

March State Board Meeting Highlights

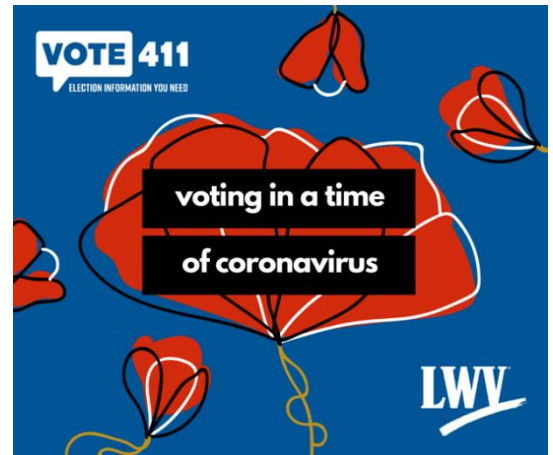
- With the Corona Virus affecting us all, your State Board has made some important changes. The 100th Anniversary County Council Meeting will be conducted online. The event is still June 6, 2020 and we still have some very interesting programs for that day. To protect all of us it will be an online event only.
- Many local Leagues will no doubt have to have their Annual Meetings online also. Your State Board is working on ways to help you with this new reality. The Committees are still working hard to improve the State League of Women Voters.
- The Budget Committee is working on next year's budget and the Nominating Committee is forming a slate of candidates. Won't you please consider serving when they call you? Serving on the State Board can be an invaluable experience for you and can only add to the assistance of your Local League.

Voter Services Work

Voter Registration: In-person voter registration events have been cancelled since early March as part of more general social distancing efforts. In particular, naturalization ceremonies have been canceled until at least April 24. When the ceremonies resume, we will continue with our voter registration program at the District Courthouses in Greenbelt and Baltimore City and at the Baltimore Field Office of US Citizenship and Immigration Services in Halethorpe.

VOTE411: [VOTE411](#), the League's online source for voting information and information about candidates, is our one voter service activity that has continued as planned. Thanks to dozens of volunteers across the state, hundreds of candidates provided answers to our questions. These have been posted and publicly available for several weeks. As distribution of paper *Voters' Guides* may be limited by closure of libraries and other public places, the availability of an online source of information becomes even more important. In addition, VOTE411 is a convenient way to access a variety of voting-related information and services, including voter registration, voter registration updating and applications to vote by mail (absentee ballots).

The Upcoming Elections: The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated major changes in Maryland's upcoming elections. The Special General Election to fill Elijah Cumming's seat in the 7th Congressional District is still scheduled for April 28, 2020, but the format has been changed to a [primarily mail-in election](#). The Presidential Primary Election has been moved from April 28 to June 2, 2020. Per the [Governor's Order on April 10](#), this election will also be primarily vote by mail.



The League of Women Voters of Maryland has been in communication with other voting rights advocates working collaboratively to ensure clear plans are put in place for these elections which allow every eligible voter to exercise their right safely. In coalition we have submitted letters to both the [Governor](#) and the [State Board of Elections](#) with recommendations for best practices and [questions](#) from communities leaders which need be considered as plans are implemented.

Issues still to be addressed include the legal requirement that ballot marking devices must be available so that disabled voters can cast a secret ballot, the problem of students who registered where they attend college but are not currently on campus, and the plan to mail ballots only to active voters, not all registered voters. **No matter how these matters are ultimately resolved, it will be very important for our Leagues to take an active role in informing the public about how the elections will take place and about the importance of up-to-date voter registration.**

Maryland's Legislative Session Early Adjournment

The General Assembly adjourned at about 5pm on March 18th – about 3 weeks earlier than they had planned.

Since the announcement of the first case of community transmission of COVID-19 on March 12th, there has been a rapid expansion of measures to prevent the spread of this pandemic. Mass gatherings were prohibited by the Governor at this time, and the General Assembly put in place measures to limit interaction of members and legislative staff with others. By the 13th, all non-essential employees were required to telework, and only those who have a state-issued credential were allowed in the government buildings. General Assembly leaders decided to work through the weekend and declared they would prioritize legislation for consideration in case of early adjournment. [Click here to read more.](#)

LWVMD applauds the General Assembly leaders for working to find a solution that will meet the needs of Marylanders during this difficult time.

*However, **there was concern for the lack of public access to their legislators while they are making critical decisions on legislation.*** In response, we signed on to a letter with dozens of other advocacy groups requesting that the General Assembly pause the legislative session and return when it is once again safe to do so. [Click here to read our full letter.](#)

On Sunday, March 15th, the leaders of the General Assembly announced that they would continue their work through Wednesday, March 18th, at which time they adjourned (Sine Die was scheduled for April 6th). They plan tentatively to reconvene for a special session the last week of May to take care of any other legislative business.

More than 660 bills were passed by the General Assembly between Sunday and Wednesday.

During this shortened session, LWVMD advocates submitted more than 90 pieces of testimony. which you can access on our [testimony page](#). Learn where these and other key bills landed in over 20 issue areas in the final issue of [Report from State Circle](#). A big thank you goes out to all the volunteers who make this work possible.

Social Media Tools to Help with Moving League Work Online!

As we all know, during difficult times we must be even more vigilant about protecting our democracy - to keep your League work going we wanted to provide you with some ready to post Social Media assets. Having a strong social media presence will help to distribute your message far and wide even after social distancing – so let's make our voices stronger for today and the future!



Voter Service Promotion

LWVMD Google Drive – Graphics & Info

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1o6786b0BJ9pDoDtIPpwIDFu-kLziechE>

- As you know, our election information is still changing to adapt to the health crisis, so we will try to update these ASAP with the most current information where applicable, but feel free to drop a line if you see anything amiss – stateoffice@lwvmd.org.

Board of Elections Pages

It's a good idea to follow the State Board of Elections on [Twitter](#) & [Facebook](#) – they too are trying to spread the word about important election changes during this time. Check to see if your local board has social media accounts and follow those too for information specific to your county.

Census

Census Counts Partner Assets (Awesome Messaging and Images!)

- Graphics

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XpGNFKMqt6Y_OV32IXHV8D-ZrTxhoEFD

- Messaging Kits

<https://censuscounts.org/resources/library/>

MD Census Outreach Kit

<https://census.maryland.gov/Pages/Outreach-Tool-Kits.aspx>

Census Bureau

- Content/Posts

<https://www2.census.gov/about/partners/general/social-media-content.pdf?>

- Census Bureau Graphics

<https://www.census.gov/partners/2020-materials/social-media-graphics.html>

LWV Specific Kits

Our national organization frequently provides pre-made kits for big issues, like the [100th anniversary](#) and [Women Power the Vote](#) kits.

Also, for even more content, *I would highly recommend joining this LWV New Media Group:* <https://www.facebook.com/groups/114269905330219/>

The members of this group are from LWVs all over the country, and they offer a ton of tips and easily adaptable content.

Facebook Creator Studio – Game Changer!

[This is a great new tool for setting up and scheduling posts on both Facebook & Instagram!](#) You can easily create one post and simultaneously share it to both accounts. Highly recommend.



MORE RESOURCES FROM NATIONAL

LWVUS Webinar Follow-Up: COVID and the League: Continuing our Work in Unprecedented Times

Over 300 League supporters that joined this LWVUS webinar last week! A [recording of the webinar and the slides](#) are now available for download on the League Management Site.

Relational Digital Organizing Training on April 23rd with LWVUS

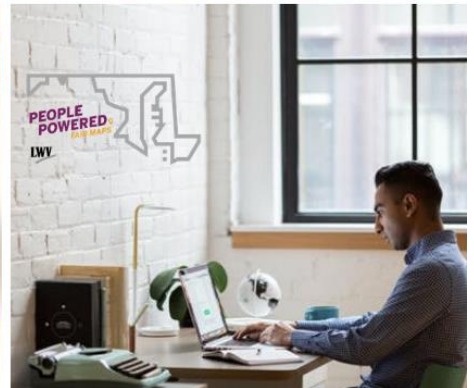
On April 23rd from 3-4pm ET the Organizing team will host a training through Zoom focused on Relational Organizing in a Digital World: Conducting 1:1s using Video Chat and Phone. To join, [please register!](#) This training will be limited to 100 attendees. So if you are unable to join at the 3-4pm ET, we are offering the same training from 4:30pm-5:30pm ET. If the first option is full, you can [register for the repeat training!](#)

Co-Led Community Calls with National Staff and League Members

Starting in May, LWVUS will be host monthly community calls which will serve as a co-led platform for national staff and League members to come together to learn with and from each other! Join the May Community Call on May 12th from 3-4pm ET by [registering!](#) These monthly community calls will allow for us to connect, destress, and build community together. Additional details to come! Please share your ideas for future calls and trainings by [filling out this form.](#)

LWVMD VIRTUAL COUNCIL

June 6
9am - 12pm



Call to Council – June 6th!

The Maryland State League's Biennial Council will be held on **Saturday, June 6, via Zoom, online**. In addition to conducting our normal business of adopting a budget, we'll still have workshops, and speakers.

For purposes of voting delegates, according to the LWVMD bylaws, "the council shall be composed of the LWVMD board, two representatives from each local League, and one from each MAL unit and inter-League organization." Of course, we encourage all members to attend - the more the merrier! Please watch your inboxes for registration information and additional details.