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STATE BOARD LETTER

April - May 2020

LWVMD Calendar

May

- 7 – Beginner’s Guide to Social Media Tools Training with LWVUS – [p. 9](#)
- 13 – Everyone Votes: [The State of Voting in Maryland Webinar](#) – [p. 4](#)
- 14 – [Our \[Virtual\] Day on Capitol Hill](#) (Register by 5/8) – [p. 7](#)
- 16 – LWVMD Board Meeting 9:00 – 12:00 Noon Online
- 27 – Voter Registration Deadline – [Click Here](#) to make sure you’re registered and your information is up to date!

June

- 2 – Primary Election – [primarily by mail, limited in person voting available](#)
- 6 - LWVMD [Virtual State Council](#) – read further for more information! [p. 5](#)

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

We hope that all of you are well during this very different and challenging time. The pandemic has meant canceling local fundraising events, adjusting annual meetings and giving up our usual voter registration events. Members working on the Voters’ Guides have been faced with rapidly changing dates and voting procedures as they tried to finalize printed guides. We are

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.](#)



really impressed with the way our League leaders have carried on and adapted to online meetings.

Our intrepid State Director Ashley Oleson has been working long hours at home keeping up with all the changes in the elections and helping us communicate information about voting, the Census and other issues.

She, along with our election experts, Barbara Crain, Ralph Watkins and Nancy Soreng have spent countless hours working with coalition partners to advocate for security and accessibility in our vote-by-mail elections. Meanwhile, the Online Services Committee, Personnel, Budget, and State Council committees have been planning for LWVMD's future during and after the pandemic. See the article about our exciting online State Council and the flier for registration in this SBL. Early in May, you will receive an emailed copy of the State Council Workbook with the budget and program recommendations.

You will see that the Board has recommended increased staffing as we aim to make LWVMD a more effective leader in championing our legislative priorities and serving our local Leagues. We propose to adopt a state study of mail-in voting at council to fast-track adoption of a position. The study is all-the-more relevant in view of the mail-in voting for the April 28 and June 2 elections.

While the decline in revenues will make it difficult to implement many reforms we have supported, they are needed more than ever. The pandemic and need to teach online has exposed the race and class disparities in computer ownership and internet access on top of other education inequities. Maintaining the safety net (including health care) for vulnerable populations, providing adequate and equitable public transportation, improving voter access and security of elections, etc. still need support.

We are grateful for the League leaders at all levels who have carried on our work online. Let's be bold in forging ahead to make LWVMD more effective and able to lead on our voter education work and legislative issues during the next 100 years.

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

Voter Services Work



How quickly things can change! In February, League members across the state were busy getting candidates to submit answers to the League's questions for **VOTE411**. As March began, we were on track with preparations for our *Voters' Guides* and other activities associated with the special general election in the 7th Congressional District and Maryland's statewide primary election. Both elections were scheduled for April 28, with early voting from April 16-23.

As the scale and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear, the state's election plans quickly changed. And then changed again. First, the special general election became vote-by-mail only, while the primary was postponed until June 2. Then the primary was changed to vote-by-mail and then to vote-by-mail with limited in-person voting. On April 13, limited in-person voting was added to the special general election as well.

The League of Women Voters has been involved with the changes in the elections in three ways:

1. LWVMD was one of many organizations that raised concerns about mail-in voting only. Issues included accessibility and privacy for voters with disabilities, recent passage of a state law requiring same-day voter registration, and the fact that there would be individuals who did not receive ballots in the mail but believed they should have gotten them.
2. LWVMD has expanded its traditional focus on voter education to include [education about the mechanics of mail-in elections](#). Historically, the most common reason that absentee ballots are not counted is that they are not postmarked or received on time. Other important factors not signing the oath that must accompany the ballot and voting more than one ballot (i.e., also voting in person). We will be emphasizing these points and others in the coming days and weeks.
3. 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.**

Barbara Crain, Voter Service Chair
bcrain@lwvmd.org

Volunteer Highlight – Election Heroes!

Amid the scramble to ensure the April 28th Special Election went as smoothly as possible, many dedicated League members stepped up to contribute in many ways. Here are a couple of pictures shared by the Everyone Votes Coalition of LWVMD Members who took shifts to do socially distanced drive-by observations of polling places to ensure things were running smoothly – *right to left* Lois Hybl and Ellen Flynn Giles. Not pictured is our Voter Service Leader, Barbara Crain.





As Maryland continues to grapple with challenges of the COVID-19 virus, a number of emergency measures have been put in place to protect public health and every Marylander's right to vote in the upcoming June 2, 2020 Primary Election.

Join the [Everyone Votes Maryland coalition](#) for a webinar discussion on the changes made to the upcoming election, the impact these changes have on different groups of voters, and how to ensure you are able to exercise your right to vote.

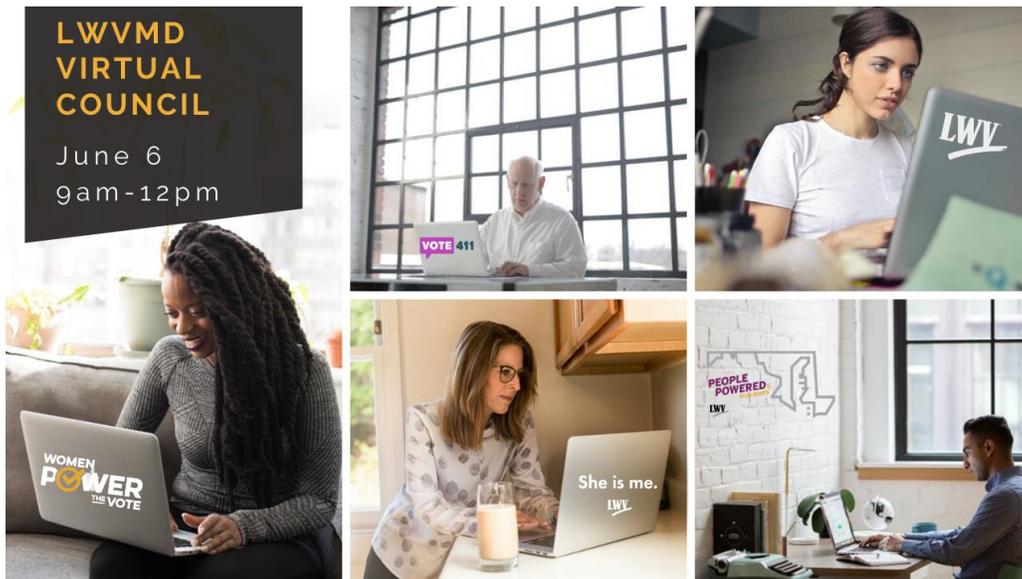
Featured Speakers:

Kristen Harbeson, MD League of Conservation Voters
Ben Jackson, Disability Rights MD
Joanne Antoine, Common Cause MD
Ralph Watkins, League of Women Voters MD
NAACP Baltimore
Sergio España, ACLU MD
Cristi Demowicz, Represent MD
Emily Scarr, Maryland PIRG
Yaheiry Mora, CASA
Tasmin Swanson, Baltimore Votes

This event is completely free and open to the public. Attendees will be provided with an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the webinar.

Please note: Zoom conference information will be provided after registration through Eventbrite.

To register, visit <https://everyonevotesmd.eventbrite.com>



While Marylanders stay physically distant to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the critical work and internal operations of the League of Women Voters of Maryland continue unabated. At a time of unprecedented challenges, the state League is eager to engage members in virtual collaboration and learning as we prepare for the year ahead.

WOMEN POWER THE VOTE

A century ago, our foremothers won the right to vote. The League of Women Voters was founded to engage women in government, as voters, educators and advocates. One hundred years later, we are united in our mission to empower voters and defend democracy, yet many obstacles remain. As we begin the League's second centennial, our success will depend on understanding our changing world, facing our mistakes and working together to create a more perfect democracy.

AGENDA

8:30am - 9:00am - Log into Zoom Meeting/Zoom Assistance

9:00 am - 9:45 am - Welcome & Business Meeting*

9:45 am - 10:30 am - *Getting Out the Vote from Your Home* - Trainer, **Maggie Bush**, Programs & Outreach Director LWWUS

15 Minute Coffee Break

10:45 am - 11:30 am - *How to Combat Online Election Disinformation* - Trainer, **Bret Schafer**, Media & Digital Disinformation Fellow at the Alliance for Securing Democracy



11:30 am - 12 pm - Keynote Speaker - Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins

Former LWVUS President & Author of

[*The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters*](#)

Receive a 20% discount code with registration!

NOTE: The LWVMD Virtual State Council will be conducted online via Zoom. Although you may listen in by telephone, **attendance on a computer or smart device is strongly recommended.**

*According to the LWVMD bylaws, "The Council shall give guidance to the board on Program, methods of operation and proposed budget. (For voting purposes) 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."

ALL members are welcome to attend Council and enjoy our excellent speakers!

[**Please Click Here to Register Today!**](#)

Vote By Mail Study for Consideration at Council

Due to the unique circumstances that have produced an emergency procedure of voting by mail in the Maryland State Primary, the State Board decided it is important and timely for LWVMD to look at the process of Vote By Mail. An adoption by Council would put the possibility of a position on this issue ahead by at least a year. Since Montgomery County has started looking into the issue, we already have a committee chair and volunteers to work on the study. If adopted, we are encouraging Local League members to volunteer. It is important that a state study has input from representatives throughout the state. If this study is adopted at Council we could possibly have a position at least a year ahead of if it were adopted at State Convention in 2021.



Talk to your Congresspersons about

VOTING RIGHTS IN A TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

MEMBER EVENT

In years past, LWVMD has organized a “Day on Capitol Hill” for interested members to visit their Senators and House representatives, and lobby for (or against) some of the current congressional legislation of interest to LWV. This year, all Congressional offices are relying on tele-work and tele-conference, so we are requesting a series of ZOOM meetings for Thursday, May 14.

The exact meeting schedule is still being worked out, and we could never count on meeting with all our Senators and Representatives themselves (fall back has always been meeting with some of their knowledgeable staffers) we are sure we can have meaningful discussions with all offices where we have constituent LWV members who want to be engaged.

This year’s topic is Voting Rights and resources for mail-in ballots, in anticipation of the need for most voters to maintain a healthy degree of “social distancing” quite possibly through the general elections on November 3.

LWVUS has already sent out an “Action Alert” to members on the same topic - [Click to Read LWV's Memo to Congress](#) & [Click Here to Act Now](#)

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

[Please register no later than Friday, May 8!](#)

This is a **FREE** LWV Members Only Event

ICYMI: Message from LWVUS About Virtual Convention

The LWVUS board and staff have been observing the COVID-19 pandemic closely and considering how it could impact our upcoming 54th LWVUS Convention scheduled to be held at the end of June in Washington, DC and we know many of you have been wondering the same. We appreciate your messages and the support offered as we've taken the time needed to thoughtfully consider all options.

This was far from an easy decision but with the health and safety of our members as our primary concern, **we have decided to transition Convention to a virtual event.**

We are still working through all details on this virtual Convention but can share the following with you:

- Business sessions will be held on June 25-27 and we are planning the agenda with consideration towards all time zones.
- We will host a full plenary and are working closely with our parliamentarian to observe all governance guidelines for a virtual space. All requirements around delegates, quorum, and how we conduct our business will remain the same. Detailed instructions will be sent to all delegates ahead of the first plenary session.
- **We will be including the Convention Awards as part of this virtual experience and details can be found at <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/council-convention/2020-convention-awards>**
- All current registrants will receive a full refund. An email from our registration software will be sent with instructions. We are offering registrants the option to convert their registration fee to a donation to LWVEF.
- We are working with the hotels on all existing hotel reservations. All reservations will be cancelled at no penalty. We will alert you of any action required on your part as we receive that information from the hotels.

While it is unfortunate that we cannot gather in person to celebrate our 100th Anniversary and all of the amazing work our Leagues have done over the past two years we are grateful to have technology available to us that will allow us to gather virtually. We are dedicated to making this a celebratory and productive experience.

Registration for the virtual Convention will open in early May and we will provide further announcements and instructions as we have them.

If you have any questions please contact Christina Davis, Special Projects Manager, at cdavis@lwv.org.

Funding Opportunity – Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

LWVUS is Now Accepting Applications for New Training and Grant Opportunity

In May we will be launching a new training program and grant opportunity with a focus on Equitable Leadership. Participating Leagues will receive access to online training provided by [Leadersity](#) and a **one-time \$500 grant to help expand DEI efforts**. Key goals of this program are to strengthen and support Leagues' DEI work through training and financial support, build programs that incorporate DEI goals to support long term sustainability and further our mission, and enhance data tracking to amplify our story.

The program is limited to 50 Leagues and we are asking all interested to complete an application. **Applications are due by May 14 and can be completed [online](#).**

Have you heard the news? We're a Webby Nominee!

VOTE for us for a People's Voice Award: <https://bit.ly/2z4iOcQ>



5/7: Beginner's Guide to Social Media Tools Training!

In coordination with the expertise of all teams at the national office, the LWVUS Organizing team will continue its bi-weekly training series with the help of the Communications Department! On May 7th from 3-4pm ET, we will be offering a training through GoToWebinar that focuses on the basics for how to use your available social media platforms to maximize your presence, power, and reach! [Register today!](#) For the latest updates on organizing trainings and resources to build League power, visit the [League Management Site!](#)

The Census and Coronavirus

In these times of uncertainty and physical distancing, standing together with our communities is more important than ever. And it is so easy to take the census right from your own home. There are three ways that you can fill out the [2020 Census questionnaire](#), and the ways to do in compliance with social distancing protocols.



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

<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.

[Click to Enlarge and View as PDF](#)

BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND'S FUTURE Funding Formula Explained

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future funding formula passed during the 2020 legislative session. This formula funds the implementation of the [Kilwan Commission recommendations](#), which will build a world-class education system for all Maryland students. Maryland's funding formula is one of the most complex in the country, but we've summarized the important components below. Click the links for more details.

