

State Board Letter

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LWVMD Calendar

- | | | |
|------------|------|---|
| Nov | 1-30 | Native American Heritage Month |
| | 10 | Case Method Project Community Discussion
virtual, 7 - 8:30pm |
| | 11 | Local Leagues' Deadline: Legislative Priority Survey |
| | 17 | LWV White House Protest: Voting Rights Now
White House, 9:30am |
| | 25 | Thanksgiving |
| | 30 | LWVMD DEI Book Club
virtual, 4pm - 5pm |
| Dec | 10 | Human Rights Day |

Redistricting Hearings Calendar

Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission

- | | | |
|------------|----|--|
| Nov | 10 | Howard County
virtual, 6pm - 8pm |
| | 15 | Statewide
virtual, 6pm - 8pm |
| | 18 | Harford and Cecil Counties
virtual, 6pm - 8pm |



The SBL is a monthly LWVMD publication that seeks to strengthen understanding and collaboration between the Board and local Leagues statewide

Co-Presidents' Message

On behalf of the state Board, we would like to thank you for strengthening our efforts to carry out the League's core mission to Empower Voters and to Defend Democracy, and for supporting our commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) through your participation in and support of the many events and activities held in October.

As described in this issue, almost 60 LWVMD members joined with other League members to participate in the October 20-23 Freedom to Vote Relay and Rally with strategic stops in West Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia (see page 9). In another show of support, over 100 members participated in the October 29 Advocates Training Session and more than 60 attended the October 27 DEI

Book Club.

Again, we thank you for your tremendous support!

In addition, we want to explain to local League presidents that in compliance with the state policy to hold open LWVMD Board meetings, they will continue to receive Board meeting agendas in advance of our monthly meetings along with the Zoom meeting links.

We look forward to collaborating and working with you on upcoming legislative and public policy issues.



Deborah Mitchell (l) and Nancy Soreng (r), Co-Presidents

State Board Meeting Highlights

Online Services Committee members provided assistance and instruction on NationBuilder to three local Leagues last month and a training session on Google apps for the LWVMD Advocacy Team. If your League could use help in either of these areas, contact Richard Willson, secretary@lwvmd.org, or Niecy Chambers, nchambers@lwvmd.org.

Though the deadline to submit VOTE411 questions is January 5, 2022, any submissions received before the holidays would be greatly appreciated for it means Voter Services committee members can begin working on the questions before the holiday crunch. Send your suggestions to Barbara Crain at bcrain@lwvmd.org.

The Program Committee held its first Equity in Education Study meeting last month, which included members of the LWVMD and five local Leagues. If you'd like to work on this study, attend one of the meetings held the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Also, if your League has an existing position on this topic, please forward it to Program Chair, Linda Kohn at lkohn@lwvmd.org.

LWVMD's Youth Engagement compiled a list of redistricting resources intended for high school teachers. The list was forwarded to local League presidents. If you would like a copy of these resources, click [here](#).

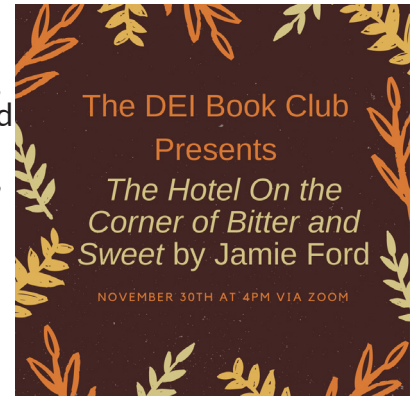
Stacey Morrison, SBL editor

Committees

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Book Club

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee held their monthly book club on October 27. The club read *The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore, a story of not just how one man grew up in West Baltimore, but how he found his way through life while a counterpart shared his name. In a story that highlights the very real obstacles minorities face when making survivor decisions every day, Moore paints a picture of what people will and won't do to ensure their family lives their best lives.

With over 65 people in attendance, the DEI Committee was pleased to have Mr. Moore join the club meeting to entertain our musings and ideas over his work. The club discussed such themes as medical biases, tough choices parents make when they suffer generational trauma, and the effects of wealthy institutions and the surrounding impoverished communities. Mr. Moore, who is familiar with the Maryland landscape, shared how he thinks it would benefit these communities to have people think of them. The DEI Committee is deeply grateful that Mr. Moore took the time out of his day to discuss his life with us and shed light on those topics that attendees may have not known as much about.



Please join us on November 30 at 4 p.m. to discuss our November pick, *The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*. This book tells the story of a man dealing with the aftermath of living through the internment camps in the pacific northwest and trying to find a lost love. The book club is free and open to all. To join the conversation, email State Director Nikki Tyree at stateoffice@lwvmd.org to receive the Zoom link.

The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet, by Jamie Ford
Tuesday, November 30, from 4 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Nikki Tyree, State Director

Thank You, Dr. Yount, for Your Generous Bequest

Agnes Bell Yount, a member of the League of Women Voters of Allegany County passed away at age 83 in Hickory, North Carolina, in September 2020. LWVMD recently received a \$5,000 donation from her estate for which we are truly grateful.

Dr. Yount was a retired professor at Frostburg State University in Frostburg, Maryland. She was a past member of the La Vale Civic Association and active in the Allegany League of Women Voters which disbanded in 2009.

Dr. Bob Morgan, Professor Emeritus of French and Mathematics, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, North Carolina, wrote, "Agnes Bell Yount was a dear friend of mine at Lenoir Rhyne College (now Lenoir-Rhyne University) and at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, along with her husband, Dr. Ray Yount....Ray and Agnes were two of the most intelligent people whom I have been able to call my friends".

While we don't ever budget based on getting a bequest, these gifts make a tremendous contribution to our ability to fulfill our mission. Sometimes they increase our capacity, and sometimes they make up for an overestimation of revenue. But they are always appreciated and put to work to empower voters and defend democracy.

Nancy Soreng, Co-President

Committees

The LWVMD police accountability advocacy efforts this year will be two pronged, supporting legislation endorsed by the [Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability](#) (MCJPA) and mobilizing local League engagement in police reforms.

The MCJPA holds monthly meetings with partner organizations and has created regional coalitions to advocate for the fair implementation of Police Accountability Boards (PABs). Legislative priorities for next session will include the reintroduction of bills from the last session to limit the role of School Resource Officers and new bills to require plain clothes police officers to wear body cameras.

Every county in Maryland must implement a Police Accountability Board (PAB) to oversee police misconduct investigations before July 2022. The county governments are responsible for defining the composition of the PABs, as well as funding and staffing. The success of these boards to hold police accountable for misconduct depends on how the PABs are implemented in each county.

Support is available to local Leagues to enable participation in the implementation of Police Accountability Boards in their counties, including training and educational materials. Local League involvement is critical because of concerns that county governments will attempt to limit community oversight by controlling appointees to the PAB, which has already been attempted in Calvert County. A number of local Leagues, including Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Frederick County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Anne Arundel County, and Calvert County, have gotten involved by attending training sessions, reaching out to their county governments for information, and joining local coalitions working on PABs.

Contact police accountability team Chair, Ericka McDonald, at elmcd@lwvbaltimorecounty.org with questions about county PABs and other policing reforms in Maryland.

Ericka McDonald, Police Accountability Committee Chair

LWVMD Fall Workshop Wrap-up



The LWVMD Fall Workshop, held September 25, drew over 80 members from across the state. This annual event gives League members a chance to expand their knowledge about the League, to hear from and share ideas and creative strategies with other League members, and to discuss how each local League can help build a stronger League presence in Maryland. In addition to workshops in which League leaders shared best practices in the areas of internal communications and candidate forums, attendees could choose to participate in sharing studios that included board member responsibilities, tips for building membership, the role of a League Treasurer, fundraising strategies, DEI reflections, best practices around voter service activities, and League youth engagement efforts.

This year's keynote speaker was Dr. Alexander Pope, Associate Professor of Social Studies Education at Salisbury University and Director of the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement. Dr. Pope's talk centered on improving civic life and changing communities through a process called Disciplinary Citizenship, in which being factually informed is not enough, one must also form reciprocal partnerships with others and demonstrate that one's knowledge can benefit others. In order to build reciprocal partnerships, one must truly understand the positions and values of others and demonstrate that other's perspectives are respected. By building relationships in this way, trust is fostered and all sides see that the relationship has value. To view a recording of Dr. Pope's presentation, click [here](#).

Stacey Morrison, SBL editor

Committees

Redistricting Advocacy Still Going Strong



The LWVMD Redistricting Committee has been keeping active in their efforts to advocate for fair and representative maps. On September 23, the LWVMD, together with The Peoples Maps campaign of the [Tame the Gerrymander Coalition](#) (TTG), co-sponsored a state-wide Town Hall called *Redistricting, Maryland and You*. Joanne Antoine, Executive Director of [Common Cause Maryland](#), and Marcia Johnson-Blanco of the [Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law](#) presented, in addition to Beth Hufnagel, Redistricting Chair for LWVMD. In case you missed the event, you can watch a recording [here](#). The TTG Coalition has also provided input to the [Maryland Citizen Redistricting Commission](#) at the request of one of the commission members.

In regards to education and outreach, the League held redistricting briefings with the [Legislative Latino](#) and [Asian-American and Pacific-Islander](#) Caucuses, September 28 and October 15, respectively, which were well-attended by a sizable portion of these caucuses. Committee members shared the League's current redistricting goals and outlined their 2022 legislative priorities. Members shared these same goals

in individual meetings with over eleven state delegates or senators. In addition, the LWVMD Redistricting Committee hosted four webinars requested by various groups in September with an additional two offered in October. Social Media outreach on FaceBook and Twitter has been consistent and strong, with over 7800 engagements with users in 2021. If you don't already like or follow us, please start today to stay informed on a daily basis.

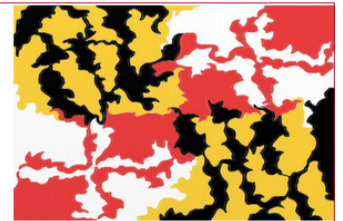
The [Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission](#) (LRAC) has scheduled 12 hearings ending on November 18, and members of the League's Redistricting Committee and local Leagues have either testified or plan to testify at ten of these hearings; for several presenters, this was their first time presenting on behalf of the League. At the Baltimore City hearing, the League was the only in-person testimony offered. League members advocated for an immediate release of the LRAC draft maps and consideration of communities of interest.

The Maryland Citizen Redistricting Commission (MCRC) has completed its hearings and plans to finalize its maps shortly and present them to Governor Hogan for his review. He must present his state legislative map to the Maryland General Assembly on January 12, the first day of the 2022 Session. PDF versions of the most recent maps are available on the MCRC's [website](#).

For both commissions, the League advertised the hearings by email, explained how to sign up to attend or testify, and offered guidelines of what to ask for. Committee members also observed all hearings and meetings.

Finally, the Redistricting Committee has been working with the non-partisan [Princeton Gerrymandering Project](#) since January 2021, and they kindly expanded their initial list of key states to include Maryland; they graded the MCRC maps with an overall "A." A committee member also evaluated the MCRC maps using the PlanScore software of [The Campaign Legal Center](#), a partner of LWVUS. More details can be found at the LWVMD Action Blog *Two Non-Partisan Groups Evaluate Maps Released by the MCRC* at www.lwvmd.org/action_blog.

**Tame the
Gerrymander**



Beth Hufnagel, Redistricting Committee Chair

Committees

Case Method Project and Student Civic Engagement

Since the dawn of mankind, humanity has loved stories. Whether gathering around a fire and listening to vivid tales of our ancestors or tuning in today to hear a timely TEDTalk, we are entertained and united in our efforts to understand and remember. This distinctly human pastime influenced the development of our educational institutions, leading to a tradition of lecture throughout the centuries. However, modern science has revealed that engaging students more actively in the learning process can yield additional gains. As social studies teachers learn new methods and techniques, their goals often align with the League of Women Voters.

League members develop certain skills and dispositions that allow them to participate productively in civil society. Many would agree that asking questions, researching and reading carefully, developing evidence-based arguments, and listening to others is a good place to start. Practicing decision-making while weighing the costs and benefits for multiple groups is also worthwhile. Thinking like a citizen in a democratic republic takes time, empathy, and effort. Social studies teachers hope they can help future voters develop these skills and dispositions while they are still in high school.

This philosophy of student engagement is at the heart of the [Case Method Project](#) and its History of American Democracy cases. Developed by Harvard Business School Professor David Moss, the cases are narratives that place students at the heart of the decision-making process. Ranging in topics from the first proposal for a national bank in the early republic to questions of equality and free speech today, the cases immerse students in the context of the times and introduce many voices to highlight complex issues. As the cases are discussed, the professor, teacher, or facilitator challenges the group to wrestle with carefully crafted questions, inviting everyone to consider what they might have decided as the historical events played out in real time. This remarkable curriculum merges well with existing high school courses in American History and Government and some schools have experimented successfully with offering stand-alone courses based entirely on the cases.

Thanks to a generous anonymous donor and the collaboration of the LWV of Greenwich, CT, training in the case method methodology and the twenty-two cases are available to teachers selected by local Leagues. Additionally, local Leagues that participate have access to four of the copyrighted cases for community events:

- James Madison, the 'Federal Negative,' and the Making of the U.S. Constitution (1787)
- A Nation Divided: The United States and the Challenge of Secession (1861)
- Martin Luther King and the Struggle for Black Voting Rights (1965)
- Democracy and Women's Rights in America: The Fight over the ERA (1982)

I was able to participate in the first cohort in the summer of 2019; Professor Moss and several veterans of the Case Method Institute did an amazing job teaching the methodology. Taking the cases, which are written for college courses, into my own classroom, I saw high school juniors and seniors work hard to understand the materials. They took particular pride knowing that the readings came from scholars, rather than from the usual textbook publishing company. It was rewarding to see students wrestle with genuine problems in American history.

League Members in Maryland have an opportunity to read one of the case studies and participate in a discussion with Professor Moss on November 10 when the LWV of Greenwich hosts a virtual community discussion. To participate, please register at <https://bit.ly/LWVG5thCommDiscussion>.



image by MC from Pixabay

Genie Massey, Youth Engagement Director

Committees

On October 29, the Action Team hosted a virtual training session to introduce our advocacy program, policies and procedures. Over one hundred League members logged on to learn about the LWVMD's advocacy with the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) and how our positions can be used to impact public policy. The session included an overview of the MGA website and the LWVMD Advocate's Manual, a resource for understanding the legislative process and how advocacy works. During the session, participants were invited to share the issues that they are most interested in working on. If you weren't able to attend the session, but are interested in learning more, you can watch the one and a half hour recording [here](#).

LWVMD Hosts Session on Advocacy

The League advocates on many issues in three broad areas: making democracy work, protecting the environment, and social and economic justice. The League's advocacy work is accomplished by teams of volunteers who track legislation, choose bills to work on, participate in coalitions, and draft testimony for legislative hearings. Teams also develop communications such as issue papers, legislative updates, and action alerts.

The Action Team will reach out to attendees to form advocacy issue teams and to provide guidance to prepare for the legislative session. The Team is also seeking input from local Leagues on legislative priorities and inviting volunteers to participate in our advocacy efforts. Please contact Action Team Chair JC Hooker at jchooker@lwvmd.org if you have questions about volunteering or would like to be part of an advocacy issue team.

Nancy Soreng, Co-President, and Ericka McDonald, Board Director

Constitution Day Event Now Available for Viewing

To commemorate the signing of the Constitution on September 17, 1787, LWVMD recently co-sponsored* its 15th Annual Constitution Day program for its members and guests. As always, this year's program, presented via Zoom, did not disappoint. If you missed it, click [here](#) for a second chance to learn of *An Audacious Idea Whose Time Has Come: The Democracy Constitution*. If you'd like to read more about a Democracy Constitution, visit www.democracyjournal.org to view content related to this idea.



image by [Wynn Pointaux](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Most Americans think that contemporary political dysfunction is rooted in a failure to follow constitutional rules and live up to constitutional ideals. From this celebratory perspective, the solution to our political ills is a renewed commitment to the Constitution of the United States. But Sanford Levinson, a professor at the University of Texas Law School, and Michael Tomasky, a columnist, editor, and author, think this consensus may be fatal to the future of American constitutional democracy. Their bold view is that political dysfunction is rooted in our commitment to following the constitution. They believe the solution to our political ills is a constitutional convention that would draft a new and better 21st Century Constitution for the United States.

*Co-sponsors: the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and the University of Maryland, College Park, Department of Government and Politics, MLAW Program.

Submitted by Andrea Gruhl, Board Director

Advocacy

No More Excuses: Voting Rights Now!

The recent surge in anti-voter laws emerging from state legislatures around the country constitutes an attack on American democracy and the freedom to vote. Passing federal voting rights legislation is a priority for the LWV, as is securing the right to vote for residents of the District of Columbia, currently over 700,000, who have not been able to rule themselves since 1801. For these reasons, the LWVUS has embarked on a strategy of escalation which demands “No More Excuses” of President Biden when it comes to protecting voting rights.

In October, the LWVUS, in conjunction with many voting rights advocates and organizations--such as the People for the American Way, Declaration for American Democracy, Black Voters Matter, and the Democracy Institute--staged three protests at the White House. The protests on October 5 and October 19 included acts of civil disobedience that resulted in numerous voting rights advocates being arrested. You can read more about those events on the [LWVUS website](#).

On November 3, the LWVUS co-organized a fourth protest in front of the White House in which advocates not only risked arrest as they called on President Biden to use the full power of the presidency to protect our Freedom to Vote, they were ultimately arrested. Among the 59 civil rights leaders, faith leaders, and organizational leaders who were present and arrested were LWVMD's State Director Nikki Tyree and Board Treasurer Janet Bellizzi. By risking arrest via civil disobedience, each of these women followed in the footsteps of suffragists whose courageous acts one hundred years ago drew attention to the rights of women to vote.

These protests will continue to take place until the Biden-Harris administration steps-up their commitment to voters and works with the Senate to secure the votes necessary to pass meaningful voting rights legislation. The pressure has already made an impact. Following the October 19 action, President Biden's Press Secretary, Jen Psaki, stated in her October 22 briefing that the president will discuss filibuster reform “because not getting voting rights done is not an option.”

The next White House protest will be Wednesday, November 17, at 9:30 a.m. To join the protest, sign up [here](#). As future protests are organized, the LWVMD will notify members via action alerts. To receive these alerts, sign-up for them on the LWVMD website, www.lwvmd.org/action_signup.



Protesters at the November 3 demonstration at the White House including LWMD State Director, Nikki Tyree (l), and Treasurer Janet Bellizzi (r)

Submitted by Stacey Morrison, SBL editor

Advocacy

Freedom to Vote Relay and Rally



Last month's 3-day [Freedom to Vote Relay and Rally](#), sponsored by the Declaration for American Democracy coalition, kicked off with a caravan that started in Charleston, West Virginia and ended in Washington DC at the U.S. Capitol. The purpose of the event was to bring attention to the urgent need for Congress to pass pending legislation that will protect voting rights. The LWVMD sponsored a team of bike riders and support volunteers for the entire 54-mile Maryland leg of the relay, which passed through Point of Rocks and Glen Echo Park, where relay participants were joined by the family of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who then marched past Ben's Chili Bowl in Washington, DC, on their way to the concluding celebratory rally outside the U.S. Capitol.

Speakers at Point of Rocks press conference, hosted by the LWVMD, were:

- Joanne Antoine, Executive Director of [Common Cause Maryland](#)
- Kimberly Michelle Scott, Founder of [Moving Us Forward](#) and former Social Action Chair for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Frederick Chapter
- Shruti Bhatnagar, Chair of the [Sierra Club](#), Montgomery County, MD
- Nancy Soreng, Co-President, [League of Women Voters of Maryland](#)
- Cliff Albright, Co-Founder/Exec. Director of [Black Voters Matter Fund](#)

LWVMD attendees Deborah Mitchell, Co-President; Nikki Tyree, State Director; Richard Willson, Secretary; and Genie Massey, Chair of Youth Engagement, were joined at the press conference by LWVUS's Alicia Gurrieri and numerous Frederick and Montgomery County League members. Following this event, WFMD Freedom 95 Radio interviewed LWVMD Co-President Nancy Soreng and published an article on the entire relay and rally on the [WFMD website](#).

LWVMD recruited a team that together completed the entire 54-mile relay journey. The riders, all from Montgomery County, were: Julie Saulnier, Diane Hibino, John Triplett, Nancy Connors, Janet Labella, Rob Soreng and Nancy Soreng. The LWVMD also provided eight volunteers who were stationed at various locations along the route collecting petition signatures, sharing information about the event with passersby, and giving out snacks and drinks to the riders and walkers.

The culminating rally was attended by over 500 attendees and the speakers were very compelling. The livestreamed event has been viewed more than 150,000 times; a recording of the event can be viewed on the [Declaration for American Democracy's Facebook page](#).

Nancy Soreng, Co-President



l-r: Martin Luther King III, Andrea Waters King, and Yolanda Renee King



League member showing her support for voting rights.