Two Sentences

(We adapted the following from Roberta Sharper’s remarks to the League of Women Voters of Maryland Convention, May 2015. Works by Robert Cooney informed her comments.)

Roberta Sharper represents our State League on the Governor’s Commission on the Commemoration of Adoption of the Women’s Suffrage Amendment to honor the centennial anniversary of the amendment’s ratification. In our nation, we are proud of our Constitution and the rights it secures. However, we don’t often understand the complex journey those rights took to our current understanding.

Denying women the right to vote excluded them from (Continued on page 2, Two Sentences)
Two Sentences

Roberta Sharper, Center


Spotlight on a League Member

Carol Blackburn was a relatively new Maryland resident in 1974 when the “ask” came; a neighbor invited her to a League event.

In those days, she was a young mom caring for two children during the day, and fortunately, the Montgomery County League offered daytime and evening “units” (teams). The Gaithersburg evening unit provided her diverse interactions with people and topics that interested her. It also helped her understand the political structure of her new State. In Ohio, there was a much greater focus on local municipal governments, and county governments largely served rural communities.

She stayed with the League because it continued to excite her interest. She served on the local League board and challenged herself as the Montgomery County study chair when the national League studied reproductive rights. Those
Redistricting

Congressional Districts with populations as low as 244,000 and as large as 622,000. In 1964, the Supreme Court outlawed such variations. In the recently published, *On Democracy’s Doorstep: The Inside Story of How the Supreme Court Brought "One Person, One Vote" to the United States* by J. Douglas Smith, he cited the League of Women Voters 22 times. In 1964, in the Maryland Committee V. Tawes decision, the Supreme Court declared population apportionment was not constitutionally sustainable in either chamber of the Maryland Legislature. League members were part of the Maryland Committee.

Even though the Supreme Court declared Maryland’s redistricting practices unconstitutional, the General Assembly, in 1965, adopted a plan retaining one Senator for each county in spite of great population variances. Only after the Maryland Court of Appeals voided this plan did the General Assembly shape a plan with districts of substantially equal population.

This created an atmosphere where there was finally an appetite, and the political will, to review and rewrite the entire Maryland Constitution. The General Assembly, the Governor, and the voters all took steps that led to a Constitutional Convention.

While a new Constitution, drafted by convention delegates, contained significant improvements in the redistricting process, voters rejected it. However, through the legislative process, voters approved a redistricting constitutional amendment. It calls for the redrawing of election districts after each decennial census and requires Maryland legislative districts to be substantially equal in population, compact in form, contiguous and to give ‘due regard’ to the natural boundaries and the boundaries of political subdivisions. The Maryland Constitution is silent on the shape of Congressional Districts.

The Problem Today

The Maryland Constitution still has no standard for drawing Congressional Districts. That’s why, when the Congressional map was drawn in 2011, even though a federal judge declared the 3rd Congressional district so misshapen it is "reminiscent of a broken-winged pterodactyl, lying prostrate across the center of the state", the court upheld the map because it had no legal basis to ask for it to be redrawn.

In addition, the process by which the district lines are drawn has major flaws. Maryland has a hybrid system where the Governor appoints a bi-partisan commission to help develop the new maps. While this sounds balanced, in practice this commission typically is limited to leaders of the Governor’s party and a token representative of the other party. The maps are drawn by the insiders most invested in controlling the outcome of who gets elected, and the public is not invited to the meetings where the maps are drawn...
determined. Hearings are held before the maps are drawn. The first, and only, chance he public has to comment on the legislative maps is typically at a hearing in December. Public input at these hearings has never changed the adoption of the maps – although it has spurred legal action. The public may comment at the hearing held at the special session where the congressional districts are adopted, but again, the public input has had no impact.

The last round of redistricting revealed an appalling effort to move voters around for the benefit of politicians. According to data from the 2010 Census, only 174,000 Marylanders actually needed to be placed into new districts in order to create districts with equal populations. However, the plan adopted placed over 1.5 million Marylanders - nearly a third of the state’s residents - into new districts.

What Reforms Do We Want?

1. The lines for both congressional and state legislative districts should be drawn by an independent commission;

2. To ensure the commission's independence, a. no political party should have a majority and the membership should include voters who are unaffiliated or members of a party other than the Republican or Democratic parties; b. no elected official, or political party official, should be appointed to the commission;

3. Congressional districts should conform to the same standards the Maryland constitution applies to state legislative districts (compact, composed of adjoining territory, and respect geographic and political subdivision boundaries).

How Can We Achieve This?

As early as 1978, constitutional amendments have been introduced calling for the establishment of an independent commission to prepare reapportionment plans for both legislative and congressional districts. Those proposals have received little serious consideration. That’s why the League of Women Voters and our coalition partners embarked on an aggressive campaign to engage the public in demanding reform. As Congressman Delaney said at a forum we co-sponsored at the University of Maryland last fall, “This issue is about the people versus the government. To argue against this is indefensible, so citizens have to rise up and push hard.”

In September of 2014, the Gerrymander Meander, a 225 mile relay race involved about 2 dozen athletes tracing 225 miles of the 3rd Congressional district by running, biking and boating, gained dozens of media hits including radio, television, print and on-line coverage. That year we also sponsored a cartoon contest that produced the cartoon in this article with the tag line, “I mean, who cares how the lines are drawn…right?” by Mathew Kurdt, a talented student from Frostburg University.

For three years in a row, we have drawn attention to the issue by commemorating the birthday of Elbridge Gerry, the namesake of “Gerrymandering” on Lawyers Mall in Annapolis. Each year crowd attendance and media coverage has grown.

Progress is Being Made

On August 6, Governor Hogan, announced the appointment of a
Redistricting

commission to study the redistricting process in Maryland. He charged the commission with proposing reforms to present as legislation to the General Assembly. The Governor invited The League of Women Voters of Maryland to recommend commission members, and he selected Ashley Oleson, our League’s administrator.

The study commission will include 4 Legislators - 1 Democrat and 1 Republican each appointed by the respective party leaders of each chamber, 2 representatives from a policy research organization, 1 representative from a non-profit voter advocacy organization (LWVMD), 1 representative from a government reform advocacy organization (Common Cause) and up to 5 additional members appointed by the Governor. The commission’s report is due November 3.

For more information go to: http://governor.maryland.gov/redistricting-reform/

Other signs of progress are editorials in the Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, Frederick News Post and Capital Gazette supporting redistricting reform. A poll conducted by the Greater Baltimore Committee in 2013 showed, 73% of Maryland voters statewide think having independent commissions draw voting districts is better than the current system, 19% said they think having elected officials draw voting districts is better, and 8% offered no opinion.

What You Can Do

Petitions: We need to collect as many names of redistricting reform supporters as possible. You can ask your friends, neighbors, colleagues to go to http://www.lwvmd.net/redistricting_reform and sign the petition. You can also ask LWVMD to send you hard copy petitions addressed to the LWVMD office, which you can distribute for collection at meetings, festivals, on the street, or anywhere. We need thousands of supporters from around the state to sign petitions in order to make an impact.

Submit comments to the Governor’s Redistricting Commission: The Executive Order that created the study commission stated their intention to seek input from the public. You can go to: http://www.lwvmd.net/comments_to_governor_hogan to find out how to submit your comments.

Sponsor a public forum or private house party: We have created a PowerPoint presentation with great videos and lots of important information. This can be shared at a meeting of an organization you belong to, a public forum, or with a group of friends. We can help you prepare for the presentation or provide a presenter.

(Continued on page 6, Redistricting)
Respond to Action Alerts: From time to time, it will be important to contact key legislators to encourage them to support reform. When you receive an Action Alert, please e-mail or phone right away.

Redistricting reform succeeded in other states. We can do it in Maryland if you believe it’s the right thing to do.

As with all successful people, Carol is eager to recognize any success was a team sport with her husband, David, who she described as wonderfully supportive.

While Carol admits to not fully understanding the dynamics of social media, she recognizes its huge impact on the League’s future. Offering perspective, she reminds us in her early days Montgomery County league membership was twice what it is today. She theorizes back-in-the-day the League was a principal nonpartisan advocacy group with a broad agenda. Nowadays, there are a plethora of advocacy groups with a sharper focus on individual’s interests, i.e., if you’re a clean water or clean air person, there are groups focused on your concerns.

Carol offered praise for the League’s work reaching out to various community groups and forming coalitions around discreet issues. In her opinion, those efforts broaden the League’s reputation and recognition as an honest broker of information.

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<th>Upcoming Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, September 17, Noon</td>
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<td>Saturday, September 26, 9:30</td>
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<td>Sunday, October 11, 2:00</td>
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Leadership and Membership Development

On June 11, representatives of the LWVMD board met with the Leadership Team of LWV MidShore in a consultation on building membership and strengthening leadership. The consultation was very productive, with participants taking on responsibilities to identify ways to use social media and also to appeal to more people to join the League. The team also discussed recruitment of new leaders to assist, co-lead, or succeed members who have been providing leadership for many years. A follow-up meeting was being planned for July.

Attendees included Pat Comella (Cambridge), Marla Garris (Cambridge), Karen Phebus (Denton), Jane Echer (Easton), Jane Hardy (Rock Hall) and Janice Bain-Kerr (Easton).

A Mini-History of LWVMD’s Collaborative Constitution Day Programs

By Andrea Morris Gruhl, LWVMD Director

The 9th Annual LWVMD Constitution Day Program co-sponsored with the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and the University of Maryland, Baltimore will occur at noon on Thursday, September 17, 2015 at our customary site, the law school’s elegant Ceremonial Court Room. How did this collaborative event begin? Over its 9 years what topics have been addressed, and who were the panelists? Here is a mini-history of our League’s successful series of annual celebrations of the U.S. Constitution.

In 2007, while reading a professional journal, I learned Congress had recently passed a law requiring all educational institutions receiving substantial Federal funding to have an annual event honoring the U.S. Constitution on or around Constitution Day, September 17, the day in 1787 the 12 state delegations approved the Constitution. When I read that, it resonated. I was the LWVMD Director for Homeland Security/Civil Liberties, and I had a compelling vision of LWVMD sponsoring a substantial panel program about the U.S. Constitution. As a venue, the University of Maryland’s law school

(Continued on page 8, History)
made sense. Professor Michael van Alstine, the law school’s Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, worked with me as we collaborated on choosing a topic, finding panelists, and resolving many technical matters to bring the September 17, 2007 program to fruition.

The topic of our founding Constitution Day Program was, “A Constitution Day Look at the Constitutions of the USA and Iraq.” Panelists were Susan Low Bloch, a Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center, Edison Dick, a longtime leader of the American Bar Association’s Section on International Law, and Professor Karol Soltan of the Dept. of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, College Park. Professor Bloch spoke on the U.S. Constitution. Edison Dick spoke on International Law. And Professor Soltan, who had been on the international committee that wrote the Iraqi Constitution, spoke on it. After the Q&A session moderated by Prof. Mark Graber, everyone migrated to the law school’s Atrium where panelists and attendees socialized. On the spot Prof. van Alstine asked if we could do another Constitution Day Program in 2008.

We have now collaborated on a Constitution Day Program with the law school and the University of Maryland, Baltimore for nine successive years. The collaboration produced a variety of topics and expert panelists. In 2008 the topic was “The Courts and Executive Power.” Panelists were University of Maryland Law Professors Michael Greenberger, Peter Quint, Jana Singer, and Gordon Young. In 2009 the topic was “The Census and the U.S. Constitution.” Panelists were Prof. David Super, Ryan Haygood of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Christa Jones, U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2010 Prof. Graber replaced Prof. van Alstine as Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development. That year our topic was “Health Care Reform and the U.S. Constitution.” Dean Phoebe Haddon, Prof. David Super, and Prof. Leslie Meltzer Henry were the panelists. 2011 has been our only year when the program was not on September 17 because it fell on a weekend. The topic of the Friday, September 16, 2011, program was “Judicial Review and the Constitution: Whittington and Marbury.” The panelists were Prof. William Reynolds and Dan Friedman of the Maryland Attorney General’s Office and an Adjunct Professor at UMD Law. The topic in 2012 was “Supreme Court Fall Session Preview.” Panelists were Professors Sherrilyn Ifill, Doug Colbert, and Michael Greenberger, who is also the University’s Center for Health and Homeland Security Director.

In 2013 Prof. Maxwell Stearns was appointed the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development replacing Mark Graber. Our 2013 topic was “The Supreme Court in Transition: New Rulings on Affirmative Action, the Voting Rights Act and Same Sex Marriage.” Dean Phoebe Haddon, Prof. Jana Singer, and LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara were the panelists. Due to Elisabeth’s presence and the dinner for her afterwards at the Baltimore
Museum of Art that most of the Leaguers attended, we had our biggest RSVP count for any of our Constitution Day Programs. The topic in 2014 was “The Supreme Court Justice as Constitutional Scholar.” Rebecca Taibleson, former clerk to Justice Antonin Scalia, Thiru Vignarajah, former clerk to Justice Stephen Breyer, and Aaron Zelinsky, former clerk to Justice John Paul Stevens served on our panel.


Don’t miss our 2015 program at noon on Thursday, September 17. The topic is “Love and Death on the Supreme Court: New Rulings on Same Sex Marriage and Death Penalty Executions.” Prof. Max Stearns is the Moderator. Panelists are University of Maryland Carey School of Law Professors Richard Boldt, Martha Ertman, and Mark Graber.

You can RSVP in the Current Events menu at our new www.LWVMD.net website. Email andreagruhl@aol.com if you want to volunteer services or bring cookies or party sandwiches. Also let me know if you want to reserve a parking space.

A Win-Win for the Maryland Environment

By Betsy Singer, LWVMD, Environment

Our Maryland League’s planning for environmental action in the 2016 legislative session includes our partnership in two separate coalitions: the Citizens Campaign for the Environment and The Maryland Climate Coalition.

Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Through the Citizens Campaign, our League joins about 30 environmental organizations advocating on a broad variety of environmental issues. This partnership informs our League on important challenges when confronting the legislature on pesticides, trash, recycling, storm water management, open space and land use. Promoting clean energy, and protecting communities from hydraulic fracturing (fracking) are major issues.

The group sponsors an annual Environmental Summit at the opening of each year’s Maryland General Assembly. Key legislators and government officials speak about upcoming policies and issues. We encourage League members attend to emphasize the impact of the environmental movement to legislators and key officials. The League and partner organization also staff a display outside the Senate meeting room.

In addition to a reception for new members of the House and Senate this year, the Citizens Campaign also published “Building a Resilient Maryland: A Guide to Stewarding Our Environment.” The booklet covers the environmental agenda for 2015-2019, and it serves as a briefing book for legislators, media, and the public. Our League is presently helping update the booklet for the 2016 session.
The Campaign meets once per month during the summer and fall and weekly in Annapolis during the legislative session.

**Maryland Climate Coalition**

After advocating with environmental groups for offshore wind in Maryland for several years, our League continued to work with an informal coalition that succeeded in passing the Maryland Offshore Wind Energy Act of 2013.

Today, members of the Climate Coalition are local, state, regional and national non-governmental organizations committed to seeking improved climate policy and protections in Maryland. For example, the coalition is focusing on the Maryland Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act of 2009 up for renewal during the 2016 legislative session and working to increase the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard for clean energy.

Summer action focused on public meetings of the **Maryland Commission on Climate Change**, codified in the 2015 session. The Commission held meetings around the state receiving public input on climate change. Betsy Singer testified for the Maryland League at the first meeting on July 14 in Baltimore. League members also attended meetings in Wye Mills MD on the Eastern shore, Calvert County, where League member, Janet Ashby, offered personal testimony and Largo in Prince Georges County.

The Commission will also launch a series of “roadshows” in the fall to encourage the public to action on climate change. Presentations are planned for Baltimore County, Oct. 11; Charles County, Oct. 17; Prince George’s County, Oct. 24 and Baltimore City, Nov. 21. The Howard County League is sponsoring an educational meeting about Maryland’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act on November 17 at the Columbia East Library.

**The Town Creek Foundation** provides funding for the Climate Coalition and the Climate Communications Consortium, which is developing a strategic communication initiative. It will promote messaging, social marketing and media about energy saving practices and renewal of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act and strengthening of the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard.

Meetings of the full Coalition are the second Wednesday of each month. In addition, Nancy Soreng is on the Steering Committee, and Betsy Singer is on the Policy Committee.

Membership in these Coalitions is a real advantage for the League because we are able to influence and coordinate action and learn from other organizations that share our values and positions on key environmental issues.

League members, who would like to become involved with the Environment Committee, can contact Betsy Singer at elizabethsinger446@hotmail.com. Actions include attending the Environmental Summit and rallies, writing sections of the Report to State 10Circle and contacting state legislators.
NINTH ANNUAL
CONSTITUTION DAY PROGRAM

Thursday, September 17, 2015
Program  12:00 p.m.
Reception  1:00 p.m.
Ceremonial Court Room
University of Maryland
Francis King Carey
School of Law
500 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Presented By
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND FRANCIS KING CAREY SCHOOL OF LAW
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE

LOVE AND DEATH ON THE SUPREME COURT
NEW RULINGS ON SAME SEX MARRIAGE AND
DEATH PENALTY EXECUTIONS

Moderator: Maxwell Stearns, J.D. - Professor of Law and Marbury Research Professor,
University of Maryland Carey School of Law
Panelists: University of Maryland Carey School of Law Professors:
Richard Boldt, J.D.; Martha Ertman, J.D.; and Mark A. Graber, J.D.

RSVP by September 15 to reserve seating and parking
and to volunteer or donate refreshments
(Parking - $7.00 for two hours. Carpooling encouraged)

Email your name, email address, phone and local League to
andreagruhl@aol.com or click here

Questions? 301.596.5460

Directions and Parking:
From Route I-95 (North or South) take Route 395 (downtown Baltimore). Exit onto Martin Luther King, Jr.
Blvd., staying in right lane. At fourth traffic light, turn right onto Baltimore St; pass law school on left side of
street. Turn left at second traffic light onto N. Paca St.; turn right into entrance for Baltimore Grande Garage,
which is across street from east side of law school. Parking building is for UMB Hospital patients/staff and
law school faculty, but Constitution Day attendees who reserved a space will be accommodated.
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND

FALL WORKSHOP

Saturday, September 26, 2015
Wilde Lake Interfaith Center, Columbia, MD
10431 Twin Rivers Road, Columbia, MD 21044 -2331
Registration fee: $25

(Includes morning coffee/breakfast breads, lunch, materials)

9:30 am Registration
10:00 am Welcome and Announcements
10:15 am Briefing on LWVUS study: Constitutional Amendments
11:30 am Briefing on LWVUS study: Money in Politics
12:30 pm Lunch and workshop: Group Collaboration via Google Docs
Chaired by Ashley Oleson, LWVMD Administrator

Directions:
From the North: Take Rt. 29 south to Columbia Town Center exit (Little Patuxent Pkwy).
Bear right onto Gov. Warfield Pkwy. Take 2nd right onto Twin Rivers Rd. At first light turn left onto Trumpeter Rd. Interfaith Center will be on your right.

From the South: Take Rt. 29 north to Broken Land Pkwy. Follow it West through 3 traffic lights to Twin Rivers Rd and turn left onto it. Follow Twin Rivers Rd to 2nd light and turn left onto Trumpeter Rd. The Interfaith Center will be on your right.

FALL WORKSHOP 2015 REGISTRATION FORM
(Deadline for Registration September 23, 2015)

NAME ____________________________________________

LEAGUE __________________________________________

Phone __________________________ Email __________________________

Amount enclosed __________

Now you can register ONLINE! Go to http://www.lwvmd.net/fall_workshop_2015

Mail to: LWVMD, 111 Cathedral Street, Suite 201, Annapolis, MD 21401
or call: 410-269-0232 or email: lwvmd@verizon.net
Join the League of Women Voters of Maryland
At the Arena Stage Theater

World Premiere Play
ERMA BOMBECK:
AT WIT’S END

By Alison Engel and Margaret Engel - Authors of Don’t Mess With Texas

Sunday, October 11, 2015 2:00 p.m.
Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater
1101 Sixth Street, SW, Washington, D. C.

Tickets $90.00
(Box office price - $99.00)

Limited number of available tickets!

Contact LWVMD office by phone - 410.269.0232
or email - lwvmd@verizon.net
to confirm availability before sending your check to:
LWVMD - 111 Cathedral Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Now you can register ONLINE!
Go to http://www.lwvmd.net/at_wit_s_end

For directions to Arena Stage go to:
http://www.arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/transportation-parking/
Arena Stage is only one block from the Waterfront (SEU) Green Line Metro stop.