

The Maryland Voter



Summer 2014

Contents

- p.1 Vote411
- p.3 Pesticide Legislation
- p.4 National Voter Registration Day
- p.5 National Convention
- p.6&7 Gerrymander Meander
- p.8 Spotlight on a Leaguer
- p.9 Constitution Day
- p.10 Solar and Wind
- p.11 Rising Seas
- p.12 LWVUS Reception

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VOTE411 a Success!

By Ralph Watkins

Please say a word of thanks to your local Voters Service volunteers - the number of visitors to the Maryland VOTE411 site before the primary election totaled more than 30,000 - higher than any other state other than Texas (a state several times our size). We also heard from many sources that they confidently recommended VOTE411.org to voters seeking reliable information on the candidates.

This is a tribute to the hard work of Voters Service volunteers throughout the state from January through June: preparing questions for candidates, securing their responses, and organizing all of that data into the VOTE411 website. Thanks also to everyone who helped alert the public to this service - whether you pasted a VOTE411 bumper sticker on your car (we have more!), sent emails to friends including the link to the website, passed out VOTE411 business cards, or just recommended it to a friend. Every mention helped lead more voters to the website and the tracking data showed that it paid off. Maryland's primary turnout may have been low, but with the large number of voters using our site, it is possible that we had a higher proportion of well-informed voters.

As the General Election approaches, we will have many opportunities to build on the achievements in the Primary. There will be two state ballot questions (and local questions in some counties as well). Voters will be looking to the League to provide clear explanations of those measures. Now is the time to plan local publicity to promote VOTE411 and for individual League members to think of every friend they have in Maryland - be prepared to email, post on Facebook, or tweet the availability of VOTE411.

Continued on page 2

Vote411 continued

If you are a member of a civic association, make an announcement at a meeting or post something to its webpage. Encourage any club in which you participate to invite a League speaker to explain the ballot questions - and use that opportunity to make a pitch for your Voters' Guide and VOTE411. This will be especially effective if the meeting location has wi-fi and you can demonstrate how the VOTE411 website works.

League members are always polite, so we don't want to appear "pushy," but we don't want to be so modest that people don't know about this great service!



Sporting the Vote411.org T-shirts are LWVMD Board members, from left, Ralph Watkins, Elaine Apter, Betty Harries, JoAnn Ross, Susan Cochran, Melpi Jeffries, Andrea Gruhl, Sherry Hyman and Anne Mychalus.

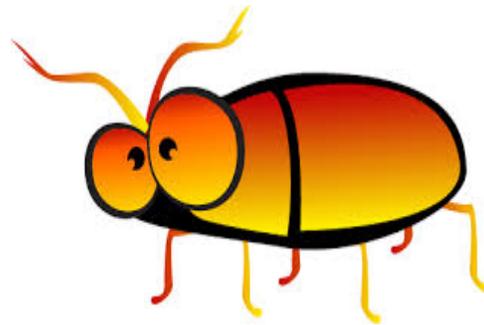
If you would like to order a VOTE411.org T-shirt and pick it up at the Fall Workshop please email Theresafreigh@gmail.com. The shirts are \$12.00 each. Please indicate whether you want medium, large or extra large.

Report on Pesticide Legislation

By Linda Silversmith

Some issues cycle more than once through the LWV portfolio. In this particular case, the topic is pesticides. When I, as a newcomer to Maryland but a rather experienced Leaguer, became the state board member handling natural resources issues in 1986, one of the major topics on our agenda was a new proposal for a state “Pesticide Right-To-Know Law”.

Not surprisingly, LWVMD worked with a coalition of environmental groups, helping to get the law passed that required lawn signs indicating when a pesticide has been sprayed and what type it was.



Signs are supposed to be posted for at least 48 hours and to specify the type of chemical used and who applied it. I had an opportunity to serve on the working group that approved the final design for the Maryland signs.

LWVMD, as a member of the Maryland Pesticide Network, also supported the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in Schools law passed in 1998 requiring that pest management in our public schools focus on non-chemical pest prevention; only when all non-toxic measures have been exhausted or are deemed unreasonable can pesticides then be considered.

Now, 16 years later, LWVMD again is working with a coalition called Smart on Pesticides (see www.smartonpesticides.org) led by the Maryland Pesticide Network. [See <http://www.mdpestnet.org/take-action/smart-on-pesticides-maryland/> for more details than I can provide here on this year’s successful campaign.]

Not surprisingly, legislation often takes more than one year to pass. The Smart on Pesticides Campaign has been working for passage and implementation of a pesticide use reporting database that requires all professional applicators to report their pesticide uses to the state so data is available to researchers monitoring impacts. Researchers need to know what pesticides have been used, when, where, and in what amounts.

Maryland House Bill 621 / Senate Bill 700, the legislation that passed in spring 2014, generates revenue for professional pesticide usage reporting through a modest increase (\$10) on the annual pesticide manufacturers’ product registration fee. [To learn more details about this or any other specific bill, go to <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frm1st.aspx?tab=home> and enter the House or Senate

bill number.]

Scientists and public health experts say that professional pesticide applicators, including farmers and lawn care companies, need to make their pesticide use information available to public health, wildlife and environmental researchers. This information will help researchers determine if and when pesticides are affecting public health, waterways and wildlife.

To date, the only data that have been available to researchers – in hard copy or as a PDF only - have been periodic Maryland Department of Agriculture voluntary surveys conducted with a sample of applicators. Therefore the Smart on Pesticides Campaign continues to work for annual, mandatory reporting by all professional applicators -- with data available online in a searchable database format that allows researchers to identify what pesticides were used and when, where, and at what amounts in a specific area -- ideally at least at a sub-watershed level.

A growing body of research links pesticide exposure to asthma, autism, ADHD, cancer, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, birth defects, fertility problems and more. Pesticides are particularly dangerous for children. Farm workers and their families, as well as urban low-income and minority communities, are disproportionately exposed to pesticides and therefore at higher risk. [While this article is being written, EPA is working on a proposal to do more to protect agricultural workers from pesticides.]

Pesticides also contaminate local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay and have been linked to intersex fish in the Potomac River. In addition, they may threaten wildlife, including honeybee populations. Last year, Maryland beekeepers reported losing nearly half of their beehives. While the cause is unknown, certain pesticides and fungicides have been linked to the problem.

The new legislation is expected to raise approximately \$130,000 annually, which will provide additional funding to be combined with existing funds for pesticide collection, assessment, and reporting through MDA. However, currently plans are to use the funds to conduct a voluntary survey, contrary to the stated needs of researchers who state that voluntary surveys are not comprehensive and are not scientifically valid. The Smart on Pesticides Campaign intends to work for a scientifically valid database based on all non-homeowners applicators reporting their pesticide use.

2014 National Voter Registration Day

Many local Leagues in Maryland are participating in National Voter Registration Day, Sept. 23, 2014. This is an effort by a wide-ranging coalition of groups seeking to increase citizen participation in elections. You should expect to see announcements promoting this event in many different media: newspapers, broadcast public service announcements, Facebook pages, and Twitter tweets.

Most Leagues are focusing on educational settings - community colleges and high schools in particular. Several Leagues, however, will be conducting registration events at libraries and other locations. If you have not already volunteered to serve as a voter registrar for the League, contact your Voters Service coordinator and sign up to participate in this national event.

National League Convention, Dallas, June 2014

By Elaine Apter

Howdy all from the great state of Texas.



National Convention is a wonderful opportunity to meet and talk "League" with delegates from all over the country. Eight delegates from Maryland attended the 2014 National Convention of the League of Women Voters in Dallas, Texas. Joyce Starks and Barbara Taha from our newest League, Prince George's; Linda Silversmith and Judy Morenoff from Montgomery; Lois Hybl, Baltimore City; Niecy Chambers and Carolyn Ciepiela, Anne Arundel; and yours truly representing

Maryland State Board. Three Marylanders attended in capacities other than delegates: Carole Conors represented the Lobby Corps, Diana Haskell, a Shur Fellow, and Alice Giles was elected as a member of the 2014-16 nominating committee.

The five busy days and evenings were filled with attending workshops, caucuses and plenary sessions. Our Maryland delegates worked hard organizing ourselves so that most of the sessions were covered. There were at least half a dozen different sessions in each time frame and choosing one to attend was difficult. Messaging, Campaign Finance, Membership and Fundraising were some of the main topics discussed.

At the plenary sessions the main program debates were on two concurrences: Human Trafficking and Living Wage. The Human Trafficking passed without any problems. The Living Wage concurrence got hung up with vocabulary and a lot of editing which led to its eventual failure to pass.

The study that was approved by the Convention is a comprehensive three-part program combining study and review of key, specific structures of American democracy, consisting of: a study of the process of amending the U.S. Constitution; a review and update of the League position on campaign finance in light of 40 years of change; and a review of the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress. National already has a campaign finance task force. The Convention asked that the redistricting task force be appointed as soon as possible so that they could start their study.

After some discussion, the delegates voted to raise the PMP by \$1.00 for the 2015-2016 budget year. There was also a challenge to Presidential nominee, Elisabeth MacNamara by

Florida League President Deirdre Macnab. Both candidates presented themselves well at a candidates' forum before the election. Elisabeth MacNamara won the election and will serve a third term as LWVUS President.

Delegates were privileged to hear several guest speakers from Texas throughout the convention. One that stood out in my mind was our opening speaker, Houston Mayor Annise Parker, who is a League member. She made some thought provoking statements: good candidates don't always make good elected officials, almost any decision a politician makes will affect somebody negatively, and we tend to confuse government and politics but they are not the same. Government is a necessity and politics is deciding who oversees the process. Mayor Parker confirmed her agreement with the need for action on many League positions such as redistricting, climate change and transparency in government.

Another interesting speaker was Steve Murdock, a demographer from Rice University who spoke about the look of the United States in the next decades and what has to be accomplished in the fields of education and job preparation to counter the growing income divide that is occurring.

After catching our breaths in the early evening, your delegates found time to relax and share each other's company. Most of us also participated in dine-a-round and had a nice variety of foods and met fellow convention delegates. I dined at a nouveau "American" restaurant with delegates from Kansas, California, Florida and Wisconsin. The only problem was that the schedule was so tight we did not get to order dessert. Maybe, next time.

Speaking of next time, the last thing the delegates heard was Barbara Yeomans, LWVDC; Olga Hernandez, Virginia; and Elaine Apter, Maryland, inviting everyone to come to the District of Columbia for the 2016 National Convention. More about that later!

Gerrymander Meander!

LWVMD is partnering with Common Cause Maryland and the National Council of Jewish Women Anne Arundel Section to sponsor a relay to trace the outlines of Congressional District 3, a prime example of gerrymandering in Maryland. The race will begin in Baltimore County on Friday, Sept. 19, and finish in Annapolis on Sunday, Sept. 21, (having covered 225 miles – far enough to reach Wheeling, West Virginia, but all in Maryland). There will be relay runners, bikers, kayakers and boaters - there are two places where the district is connected only across inlets of the Chesapeake Bay. We are optimistic that this event will attract press attention and help raise public awareness of the need for redistricting reform in Maryland.

League members are encouraged to support this event. Volunteers are needed for tasks large and small: run segments of the boundary, transport runners back to their cars, or provide food and beverages for the athlete activists. We are also in need of a captain and motorboat with running lights for one of the water crossings. Can you help or know someone who could?

You are also encouraged to cheer the runners on at the beginning, the end, or as they pass through your county - the relay will pass through Baltimore City and Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Howard, and Montgomery counties. To volunteer to help with any part of this project, use the link from the LWVMD webpage (lwvmd.org) or email the League office at info@lwvmd.org

Gerrymander Meander

Maryland is tied for first place as the most gerrymandered state in the nation.

The 3rd Congressional District (pictured here) is one of the most gerrymandered districts in America.

Voters should choose their elected officials.

Elected officials should not choose their voters!


±225 mile relay run

Olney

Columbia


Two bike legs

Four water crossings 

Final leg:
Fun Run
around
Annapolis

Annapolis

Join us
September
19-21
2014



Be part of the solution!

- * Cheer our runners on as they start their adventure in Baltimore on September 19th.
- * Celebrate at the finish in Annapolis on September 21st.
- * Help with logistics or social media along the course.
- * Run with us!

Email CCMD@CommonCause.org

Facebook "Tame the Gerrymander"

Twitter @TameGerrymander

Spotlight on League Member

Ralph Watkins, League Voter Service Guru



If you would venture into Ralph Watkins' house almost anytime in the past four months, you would probably find him in front of his computer trouble shooting Vote411 problems. That's because Ralph is the State Board member whose portfolio is Voter Service.

Ralph became involved with the League of Women Voters in Ohio when a colleague at work took him to a League meeting. Ralph joined the League in the first or second year that men were allowed to join and quickly became involved in studies and local government issues.

His interest in voters' service evolved from his favorable impressions of the *Voters' Guide* and his desire to find ways to expand its circulation. Ralph sees his role as State Board Director for Voter Service as a mix of trying to be supportive

to local voter service chairs and coordinating information for statewide candidates. He is also working for redistricting reform on the public awareness level. This is in keeping with the role of the Voter Service Director, since his main focus is voter education and awareness.

Like many aspects of League, the Voter Service role is changing. With the advent of new technology, Vote411 and the increased cost of printing, we are seeing more local Leagues going to all digital Voters' Guides. This creates a digital divide and Ralph feels that it is imperative for the League to reach out to voters who are not connected to the Internet and need information about candidates and issues. In looking into the future, he sees the League's role in Voters Service as redoubling our efforts to reach out to the non-voters with information about the role of government as well as candidates and issues.

On behalf of the state and local Leagues of Maryland, we thank Ralph and his Voter Service team for the great job they are doing in working to create a well-informed Maryland electorate.

By Elaine Apter

8th Annual Constitution Day Program



"The Supreme Court Justice as Constitutional Scholar"

Wednesday, September 17, 2014 ~ 12 noon – 1:30 p.m.
Ceremonial Court Room, University of Maryland
Francis King Carey School of Law
500 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Co-sponsored by League of Women Voters of Maryland, University of Maryland School of Law, and University of Maryland, Baltimore

Moderator: Maxwell Stearns, J.D. – Professor of Law and Marbury Research Professor, Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, University of Maryland Carey School of Law.

Panelists: Rebecca Taibleson, J.D. - Former Law Clerk to Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. Thiru Vignarajah, J.D. – Former Law Clerk to Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer. Aaron Selinsky, J.D. - Immediate Former Law Clerk to retired Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens.

RSVP by Sept. 15 for your seating and parking reservations. Email your name, email address, phone number and local League to andreagruhl@aol.com. Include if volunteering to greet or usher for program or hostess at reception. Cookie and party sandwich donors please reply to Andrea. Questions? 301-596-5460.

Directions & 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 of Baltimore Grand Garage across street from east side of law school. Parking building is for UMB Hospital patients/staff & law school faculty, but our event attendees have reserved spaces via RSVP. Carpools encouraged. Parking is \$7 for 2 hours, \$1 additional hour.

Solar and Wind Power Forum

Will the boom in solar and wind power propel the U.S. to a renewable energy future?

Get some answers from Joanna Diamond, Director of Environment Maryland, solar experts, and Tommy Landers, Maryland and D.C. Policy Director, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, on Tuesday, Sept. 16, at 7 p.m. at the Columbia East Library, 6600 Cradlerock Way in Columbia.

“Lighting the Way” is Environment America’s new study of increased solar capacity nationwide and in Maryland. Maryland is number eight in the nation in the most solar electricity per capita. Solar projects, large and small, have combined over the last decade to increase U.S. capacity 120-fold, to 12,000 MW at the end of 2013.

Tommy Landers will draw the picture on wind power in the U.S. and Maryland. According to the Department of Energy, the U.S. was the fastest growing wind power market in the world in 2012. More than 13,100 MW of new wind power capacity were connected to the U.S. grid in 2012 and a total capacity of 61,327 MW as of March 2014.

Find out what you can do, individually and collectively, to move toward a renewable energy future.

The League of Women Voters Howard County (LWVHC), HoCoClimate Change, Transition Howard County and other national and local organizations are sponsoring the forum.

For more information, contact Betsy Singer, LWVHC, elizabethsinger446@hotmail.com.

Print or E-mail

If you receive a print copy of The Maryland Voter and would prefer to receive it electronically (or vice versa), please notify the League office at info@lwvmd.org.

Climate Change Effect on Anne Arundel County

Anne Arundel County is vulnerable to the effects of climate change with rising seas. How soon will we see effects beyond the already occasional flooding of the Annapolis dock area and the low lying areas of southern Anne Arundel, which is already occurring?

To understand how and why we will see increased impact on our county, the Anne Arundel County League of Women Voters presents a world renowned expert on sea level rise, Dr. Donald Boesch, who will give an illustrated talk “Rising Seas and Rising Concern: How will climate change affect Anne Arundel County?”

It will be presented Wednesday, Sept. 10, from 7 to 8:30 at the Annapolis Area Public Library, 1410 West St., Annapolis. The program is free and the public is invited. For more information, call 410-849-8832 or email info@aa.lwvmd.org.

League of Women Voters of Anne Arundel County, MD

presents an educational program on

Rising Seas, Rising Concern:
How will climate change affect
Anne Arundel County?



Dr. Donald F. Boesch

Wednesday, September 10, 2014

7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Annapolis Area Library, 1410 West Street, Annapolis

Donald F. Boesch is a Professor of Marine Science and President of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and University System of Maryland's Vice Chancellor for Environmental Sustainability.



Free and open to the public. Bring your questions and a friend!

For more information,
call 410-849-8832 or email info@aa.lwvmd.org

aa.lwvmd.org

LWVUS Board Reception

Hosted by League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area

Friday, October 24 at 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Cosmos Club

2121 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008

Meet President Elisabeth MacNamara and her 2014-2016 LWVUS Board and LWVUS Executive Director Nancy Tate and some major staff. See your Leaguer friends from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia.

Transportation: Cosmos Club is 2 blocks west of Dupont Circle. Red Line Metro stops at Dupont Circle; take Q Street (north) exit. Walk west to Mass. Ave. passing Phillips Art Gallery. Free street parking, especially after 6:30 p.m. Parking lots and parking buildings are in area. Carpooling encouraged. Questions? Andrea, 301-596-5460.

Reception Cost: \$40 per Leaguer. **RSVP:** Deadline: October 17. Email RSVP with your name(s), address, email, phone, local League to andreagruhl@aol.com using header "**LWVUS Board Reception**" then ground mail completed form below with check covering persons RSVP'ing. Make checks payable to: League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area, or LWFVNCA.

-----Cut Here-----

RSVP Information for LWVUS Board Reception. Complete form and mail with check to: Andrea Gruhl, 5990 Jacob's Ladder, Columbia, MD 21045.

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

CHECK AMOUNT: _____ LEAGUE: _____ DATE: _____