

Fall 2012

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Voters Learn About Candidates and Ballot Measures at League Forums

By Nancy Soreng

The League has long been known for its efforts to educate voters about candidates and issues through forums and debates. Leading up to the General Election, 12 local Leagues hosted 19 events where voters could learn more about the people and issues on the November 6 ballot. In addition to the local advertising that each League engaged in, they were publicized on the League of Women Voters of the United State's Vote411 Election Information website and the LWVMD website. In many cases, links to video of the forums could be watched at a later date by those who could not attend them in person.



Forums for Board of Education candidates were held in Washington, Howard, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Carroll and Calvert Counties. Montgomery County had organized a forum for school board candidates but it had to be cancelled due to super storm Sandy.

Congressional forums for candidates running from Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 were hosted by the Harford, Howard, Anne Arundel, Washington, Frederick, Montgomery, Calvert, Kent, Mid-Shore and Queen Anne's County Leagues. Many of these were televised, and all were well attended.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland hosted a forum on Ballot Questions 6 and 7. The Anne Arundel League covered all seven statewide ballot measures and the 15 county Charter Amendments at a forum on October 25. The Baltimore City League hosted a forum on the Baltimore City Charter Amendments. Calvert County had planned to host a forum on the statewide ballot questions, but once again, Mother Nature had other plans and the forum had to be cancelled. *(continued next page)*

The St. Mary's County League also provided an opportunity for voters to find out about candidates who were running in a contested election for Circuit Court Judge at a forum they held on October 9. The Calvert County League helped residents of Chesapeake Beach learn about candidates who were running for the Town Council there.

These events provide voters with a chance to see how candidates think on their feet and interact with others, as well as the opportunity to hear about their views on important issues. Forums on ballot measures provide a more thoughtful and in-depth alternative to the rash of campaign literature and television and radio advertising that floods our mailboxes and airwaves at election time.

The public is always very appreciative of the League's efforts. However, many don't realize that volunteers who are committed to educating voters organize each and every one of these forums. Their selfless effort is one of the reasons that the League is known for making democracy work. ♦



ELECTION 2012

Thank you, Women's League of Voters! The You Tube videos regarding the seven questions/referendums were great with not only the presentations but also the pros and cons arguments made by the various debaters. Thank you again--your work has enabled me to vote in an informed and efficient manner on my absentee ballot.



Long lines for early voting in Silver Spring

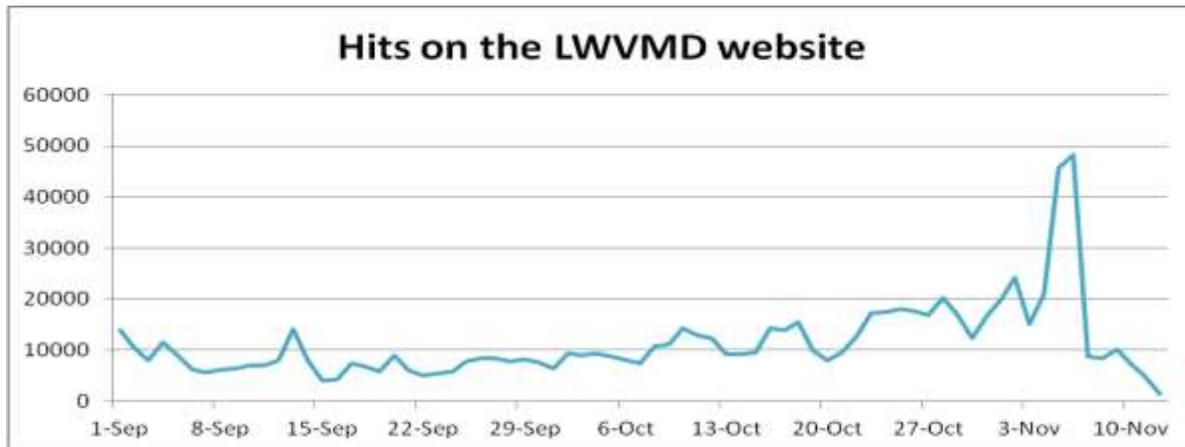
thank you for having a document about the ballot issues that was sent to my local library.... i found this document informative about every question on my prince george's county election ballot... especially question 5 and question b ... i know where to get the information on my election ballot next time. thank you !!!!



God is not for #6

LWVMD Covers the State with *Voters' Guides*

By Barbara Sanders



It took a year and 11 days and a lot of hard work on the part of many, but by the day before early voting centers opened on Saturday, Oct. 27, the LWVMD website and Facebook page offered a printable *Voters' Guide* for every county in the state. Many of the *Guides* were posted from early to mid-October. In addition to these PDF format *Guides*, a separate link also provided direct access to each of the seven statewide ballot questions, with a discussion of the present practice, the proposed change and what resulted from a vote “for” or “against” the question.

Was it worth it? Just look at the graphs below – our website averaged about 10,000 hits daily in September, 15,000 in October, when the first *Guides* began to be available, and peaked around 48,000 at the beginning of November. An additional 5,000 plus people were looking at our Facebook page (see *graph next page*).

The 20 links to the local *Voters' Guide* were accessed directly by 7,000, and the eight ballot questions averaged 1,230 views each. This does not count the people arriving from hotlinks on the local league websites and other sources.

Montgomery's page had over 2,000 visitors, followed by Anne Arundel in the mid-800s. Prince George's reached 637, and Baltimore City topped 500. Baltimore County, Frederick, Howard and Calvert all reached over 300 vot-

ers. Even in the six counties with just a state-produced pdf Guide, five of the counties averaged over 90 hits and Allegany had over 300 – probably a result of a newspaper advertisement placed a week before the election.

Fourteen counties, including the most populated urban areas and the central counties of the Eastern Shore, also produced over 200,000 printed *Voters' Guides*. Some were circulated or mailed in their communities through partnerships with local newspapers, while other Local Leagues printed the pdf format and distributed it to county and college libraries, schools and gathering points like senior centers.

All of these *Guides* were produced from the candidate responses to the questions posted on the Vote411.org website, a joint project of LWVUS and state Leagues around the country. Voters used this interactive guide to the candidates for all the offices on their individual ballot, learning about the responsibilities of the office as well as the opinions of each of the candidates and ballot questions. On this alternate format for access to election information, LWVUS reported that Maryland residents comprised almost six percent of all the visits to this national voting resource. Almost 32,500 used this resource in the five weeks from October 1 through the election. During this period, we attracted 24,000 new Maryland visitors to the site. The average visit

lasted for more than 5 minutes, viewing at least eight Vote411.org pages.

The effort began October 15, 2011 at a Voters Service workshop in Ellicott City. In the following 54 weeks, the LWVMD webmaster, Janeen Grohsmeyer, and local voters service volunteers devoted hundreds of hours setting up the website with links to voting information, entering all the races, a description of the office and the candidates' names, political parties and contact information. A variety of messages were composed and sent, encouraging the candidates to respond to our questions and to help us educate Maryland voters. A few Montgomery County volunteers helped LWVUS by staying in contact with the four qualifying presidential campaigns until they all responded to the questions for the national Vote411.org website.

Faulty e-mail addresses were corrected, messages resent and some candidates required several reminders by e-mail and telephone. A few computer neophytes also needed hand-holding to enter the data. Another group of policy-oriented volunteers from the State Board and LLs wrote the detailed back-

ground for both the seven state and the equally numerous local ballot issues.

Then the computer wizards and graphic designers among us downloaded all these materials, reformatted them into attractive packages for online or in hand reading. Some designed palm cards for us to advertise the Vote411.org website, while others proofed the drafts, and added in last minute responders, when local newspapers printed a local *Voters' Guide*. Still more volunteers distributed all these copies to community sites or manned telephone lines where voters had easy access to more detailed information than the campaigns provided in the mailed literature or the soundbites on telephone calls or television ads.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to these many *Voters' Guide* volunteers and those of you statewide who contributed to make this wealth of information available in many different formats. As LWVMD Voters Service chair, I personally have received many compliments for these resources, and I pass along to you my thanks on behalf of the voters of Maryland. Our joint efforts helped make democracy work once again! ♦



Spotlight on a Member

In each edition of the Voter, we focus on a member who plays an important role in LWVMD.



Baltimore City's Millie Tyssowski uses her organizational skills for League

Getting Organized

by Betsy Sexton

Millie Tyssowski grew up on a farm in Cedar Falls, Iowa. She attended Iowa State Teachers College and taught history and government for two years in Bloomfield, Iowa. She moved on to the University of Iowa to teach part-time in the University High School and obtain her Master's Degree in Public Administration. In 1943, she moved to Baltimore to become a budget analyst at the Social Security Administration. Here she met and married her husband, Joseph Tyssowski.

In 1955, Millie and her husband returned to Maryland from San Francisco, and Millie worked as a budget analyst and eventually became what would now be called a comptroller at Social Security Administration - selling the Social Security Administration's program budget needs to the Bureau of the Budget and Congress, and negotiating distribution of funds to departments and field offices.

A few years after Medicare was enacted as part of the Social Security Administration, Millie was promoted to heading the operational side of Medicare, negotiating contracts with Blue Cross-Blue Shield and private insurance companies, and overseeing state compliance with Federal Medicaid regulations. In 1978, she moved to the new organization, now called the Center for Medical Services, created to administer Medicare and Medicaid.

When Millie retired from the federal government in 1980, she attended a State League lobbying course, and her advocacy career with the League began. She worked first on a referendum to allow the state of Maryland to provide funds for low-income women to have abortions, since the Federal government did not provide Medicaid funds for this purpose.

She then became Advocacy/Action Chair for LWVMD and moved on to be State President. Millie chaired the LWVUS Lobby Corps In the 1990s.

Millie served as Baltimore City League treasurer and from 1997-2001 as president. Her experience as treasurer led her to create a joint Management Fund with the Baltimore County League that covers all operational expenses.

She believes her biggest accomplishment as president was working to change the Baltimore City Council composition from six districts with three council people each. An initial petition drive failed, so the City League joined a coalition and tried again in 2002. The ballot measure was successful – creating 14 single member districts.

In 2011, Millie formed the Baltimore City Election Change Coalition comprised of major non-profit organizations that worked to move city elections for council, council president and mayor to the gubernatorial cycle, as happens in all other Maryland jurisdictions. However, the state

legislature approved moving city elections to the presidential cycle. Residents of Baltimore City affirmed the legislation on November 6.

Looking forward, Millie commented on lessons learned from the November 6th election:

- Work on issues with broad appeal that cut across party lines and which interest League members, e.g., redistricting. *Work right away* for an independent redistricting commission.
- On the national level, advocate for National Popular Vote, which would bypass the Electoral College in presidential elections. (Maryland has signed on.)
- Citizens United: While the election is fresh in people's minds, work on campaign finance reform to diminish the power of special interest money in campaigns.

Millie's inspiring career in the League exemplifies her belief that the League's strength lies in following through with advocacy for positions we take! ♦



**REPORT FROM
STATE CIRCLE 2013**

This publication covers a broad spectrum of social, economic, environmental and governmental proposals before the Maryland General Assembly which the League will be monitoring. Fourteen LWV reporters will cover these issues from the League perspective, focusing on our long-considered positions and our 2013 Legislative Priorities.

Six issues are published, each approximately every two weeks, starting Monday, January 21, with the Wrap-Up Issue on Monday, April 15.

Subscribers can receive *Report From State Circle* online without charge by subscribing at:
<http://www.lwvmd.org/n/RSC/orderform>

Or by first class mail for \$25 for non-members and \$15 for League members.

Make check payable to: LWVMD and mail to:
 LWVMD
 Attn: Report From State Circle 2013
 111 Cathedral Street, Ste. 201
 Annapolis, MD 21401

Report From State Circle is also available on our website: www.lwvmd.org

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Sat 1 Dec 2012	1:30 pm - 4:00 pm	LWVMD Forum on the Electrical Grid
Wed 9 Jan 2013	8:00 am	General Assembly convenes
Mon 21 Jan 2013	8:00 am - 10:00 pm	Inauguration Day
Sat 26 Jan 2013	9:30 am - 1:30 pm	LWVMD Winter Workshop
Thu 7 Mar 2013	8:00 am - 1:00 pm	Legislative Day in Annapolis
Wed 17 Apr 2013	8:00 pm	Consensus due on LWVMD Election Study
Thu 25 Apr 2013	10:00 am - 2:00 pm	LWVMD Lobby Day on Capitol Hill (tentative)
Sat 27 Apr 2013	10:00 am - 2:00 pm	LWVMD Spring Fundraiser
Fri 10 May 2013 - Sat 11 May 2013	two-day event	LWVMD Convention

GRID RESILIENCY

MEETING MARYLAND'S 21ST CENTURY ELECTRICITY NEEDS

Learn how to keep the lights on for the holiday season! Hurricane Sandy followed by a snowstorm has reminded us again that electricity is vital to our way of life. Find out what is happening in the State of Maryland to keep the lights on.

A Task Force appointed by Governor O'Malley has recently released the "Grid Resiliency Task Force Report." The Task Force suggested ways to improve resiliency, particularly during extreme weather conditions. Distribution issues have taken precedence over transmission issues in the past year, in part due to the economic turndown with its dramatic effects upon load growth and excellent responses to demand-side management and alternative energy sources. The emphasis has shifted from grid reliability to grid resiliency which leads to the current emphasis on distribution.

Our panelists will explore questions on keeping the grid healthy, federal and state oversight of transmission and distribution, and meeting 21st century needs with 21st century technology.

An emphasis on distribution is a logical follow-up to LWVMD's study of the generation of electricity in Maryland. The electricity committee, led by Pat Comella, Mid-Shore, has organized an informative and exciting forum on December 1 from 1:30 to 3:45 at the Annapolis Library, 1410 West Street, Annapolis, MD 21401.

See flyer page 8

European election observers visited LWVMD

By Barbara Sanders and Lu Pierson

Former LWVMD President Lu Pierson and Voters Service Chair Barbara Sanders met with two international election observers from the Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) at the Annapolis LWVMD office for about an hour in mid-October. It was a wide-ranging discussion about our views on U.S. election procedures and operations, as well as how LWV participates formally at the local and state level in programs such as polling place support and voter registration.

Additionally, we provided samples of our 2012 General Election Voters' Guides and other publications on registration and voting, fulfilling our founding purpose to help educate voters through forums and the print and on-line guides. We also discussed our monitoring of and advocacy for changes in election procedures as a result of concurrence from past studies, as well as the issues currently under review for our Spring 2013 Election Process presentations.

The extensive TV advertising for the candidates surprised the international observers. Evidently in Europe it is normally the political parties and not the candidates who purchase advertising time, and there is a minimum amount of time they can purchase. For instance, in some places they are required to purchase no less than 5 minutes of air time for each advertisement, which gives them plenty of time to address an issue rather than express very short bursts of emotional blather or negative insults.

OSCE had representatives at the polls in the greater DC metro area and in more than ten other states around the country at Early Voting centers and on Election Day. An extensive preliminary report of their findings and conclusions already is available at osce.org/odihr/96960. A more comprehensive final report will be available at the beginning of 2013 and will include the vote counting process and handling of possible complaints and appeals, as well as recommendations for potential improvements.

Check it out! The report is interesting reading and provides a different perspective on how the United States conducts its election. ♦

GRID RESILIENCY MEETING MARYLAND'S 21ST CENTURY ELECTRICITY NEEDS



**PRESENTED BY
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND**

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2012
1:30 PM - 4:00 PM
ANNAPOLIS LIBRARY
1410 WEST STREET
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

PANELISTS

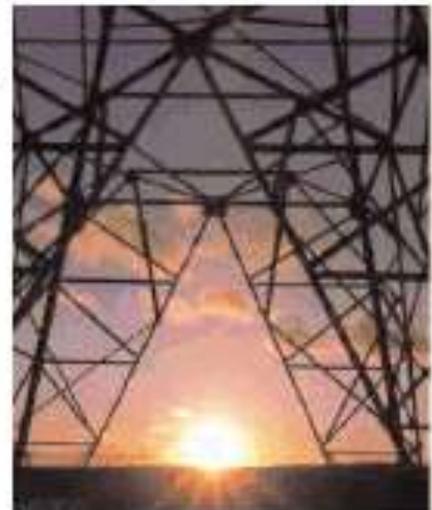
Melissa Nimits, Esq., Office of General Council,
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Denise Foster, VP, State and Member Services,
PJM Connection

Anne Eisele, Esq., Chief of Staff,
Maryland Energy Administration

Roger Berliner, Esq., President,
County Council of Montgomery County, MD

Sandi Patty, Power Plant Research Program,
MD Dept. of Natural Resources



- Keeping the current grid healthy
- Federal oversight of transmission and distribution
- State oversight of transmission and distribution
- Meeting 21st century needs with 21st century technology