

Voter



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Harriet Elizabeth Brown Calvert County Trailblazer for Salary Equalization

By Margaret Dunkle, Board Member, League of Women Voters of Calvert County

Harriet Elizabeth Brown knew what justice should look like and how to secure it. Though she joined our local Calvert County league the first year of its charter, 30 years before that she stood up for equal rights and good government.



Harriet Elizabeth Brown as a young woman. Photo courtesy of the Brown Family.

Pioneer for Salary Equalization

In 1937, as a 30-year-old teacher, Harriet Elizabeth Brown and her 29-year-old NAACP



Thurgood Marshall as a young NAACP attorney

attorney, Thurgood Marshall, used the 14th Amendment to successfully challenge Calvert County Public Schools for paying African-American teachers about half of what equally qualified white teachers earned. She earned \$600 a year, compared to \$1,100 for her white counterparts.

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LWVMD and the 2016 Maryland Legislative Session



By Ruth Crystal, LWVMD Director

Question: How'd we do?

Advocating on the state level for policy and legislation that supports state and national LWV positions is a major portion of LWVMD activity and a responsibility and

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privilege of every League member. Each fall local Leagues submit their consensus of what the important issues are, and the state League develops our annual “Legislative and Budget Priorities” for the upcoming legislative session in Annapolis (90 days - January through April). This year our priorities were: making democracy work, protecting the environment, and adequate resources to meet the basic human needs of our citizens. There were 2,817 bills introduced this year (of which only 834 passed both houses). With eighteen reporters following different legislative areas, we reported on 291 bills, and testified on 71 bills.

Some of the bills we worked on passed, and for some, we helped lay the ground work for success in future years.

In our work to protect the environment, the legislation we worked on to renew the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act of 2009 was successful, as was legislation to increase the percentage of renewable energy in Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard. However, in a surprise move, Gov. Hogan vetoed the Clean Energy Jobs Act on May 27, 2016. LWVMD issued a statement to the media on May 31, 2016.

In our work on transportation, legislation to establish oversight and to coordinate Maryland Transportation Administration transportation activities in multiple counties was successful, as was legislation to increase the transparency of the evaluation process for larger transportation projects. Both bills were vetoed, however, the veto on transparency was overridden during session.

The League worked hard on a bill to create an independent redistricting commission. The legislation did not pass this year, but the League will continue to work on this important tool for making democracy work.

The League successfully worked with an education coalition on legislation to create a commission to recommend legislation to implement updates to the Thornton Commission formula.

The League actively supported a bill that became law to guarantee equal pay for equal work. We also supported successful legislation to increase the minimum amount of food stamps an eligible individual over 62 receives to \$30 per month. Other legislation in the area of meeting basic human needs did not pass this year, but a base was built for work in the future. These include legislation banning discrimination based on source of income, a bill requiring paid sick leave, and legislation increasing the earned income tax credit.

Answer: Very well. Our work made a difference.

Maryland’s Offshore Wind Project?

By Nancy Soreng, Co-President

Working with our Maryland Climate Coalition partners, the League of Women Voters of



Maryland put a lot of energy into passing the Offshore Wind Energy Act of 2013. Governor O’Malley signed the law on April 9, 2013. Maryland is poised to be a leader in offshore wind, but an important milestone must be met this year.

The Public Service Commission must approve the Offshore Renewable Energy Credit to meet the law’s requirements and allow Maryland to continue as a leader in the off-shore wind

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Pay disparity was the norm throughout the southern and border states. According to court documents from the 1930s, all but one of Maryland's 23 counties had separate schools for "White" and "Colored" students, with only Garrett County having "no Colored Schools." All but three of these counties (Alleghany, Baltimore, and Washington) paid black teachers in black elementary schools 60 percent or less of what they paid white teachers in white schools.

Resolution of Ms. Brown's case came quickly after the NAACP legal team filed court papers on November 10, 1937. The Calvert County Board of Education settled the case just seven weeks later, agreeing to equalize salaries. In fact, both the County Commissioners and the School Board *met two days after Christmas*, on Monday, December 27, 1937, to finalize the settlement. The School Board's attorney for this case, William Luke Marbury, Jr., advised the settlement "seemed the only alternative to a costly legislation in which the Board of Education was likely to lose."

Harriet Elizabeth Brown's case was the second salary equalization case filed by the NAACP. The first, with William B. Gibbs, Jr. as the plaintiff, was filed a few months earlier against the Montgomery County Board of Education, which also quickly settled in favor of salary equalization.

Turning Point

While not the first case, Ms. Brown's case was a turning point to equalize pay for African-American teachers, not just in Calvert County, but across Maryland and the South. The day after the Calvert County Board of Education settled the case, Maryland Governor Harry W. Nice publicly pledged to support state legislation

and budget increases to equalize teacher salaries.

Other counties dug in their heels. For example, in a confidential internal 1938 NAACP memo, Thurgood Marshall reported that Prince George's County Superintendent Nicholas Orem "released" (that is, fired) all of the Negro probationary teachers as an intimidation tactic. And Anne Arundel County decided to litigate rather than settle a NAACP case brought on behalf of teacher Walter Mills, eventually losing in federal court.

With the Governor's support, the subsequent NAACP victory in federal court, and continued pressure from NAACP teacher pay cases, the Maryland General Assembly passed a 1941 law to equalize pay for African-American and white teachers. Buoyed by these successes, the NAACP went on to challenge unequal teacher salaries, based on race, in school districts across the South.

These teacher pay cases were among the first steps of the NAACP's strategy to end racial discrimination in public schools. Importantly, these efforts boosted not only the pay of teachers (the largest cadre of college-educated African-Americans) but also NAACP membership. Seventeen years later, in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the notion of "separate-but-equal" segregated schools with its ruling in a different *Brown* case – *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

Task Force to Commemorate Harriet Elizabeth Brown

In 2012, the Calvert County Commission for Women (which I chaired) set about increasing public awareness of Ms. Brown's landmark contributions. While she had received some recognition over the years – most notably, 1994 induction into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame – few

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Calvert Countians knew of her significant role as a civil rights trailblazer.

The Commission for Women first sponsored a prize for History Fair projects about Ms. Brown's life. Building on this momentum, it partnered with Calvert County's Annapolis delegation to enact House Bill 354 in 2015, establishing the Harriet Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Task Force. The Task Force met, held hearings, and issued a final report on December 27, 2015, making recommendations to the County Commissioners, Governor, and General Assembly:



SB 354, Bill Signing, May 12, 2015
Standing: Delegate Anthony O'Donnell, Delegate Michael Jackson, Calvert County Commission for Women Chair Margaret Dunkle, Legislative Aide Andrew Fulginiti, Delegate Mark Fisher, Senator Steve Waugh
Seated: Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., Governor Larry Hogan, House of Delegates Speaker Michael E. Busch

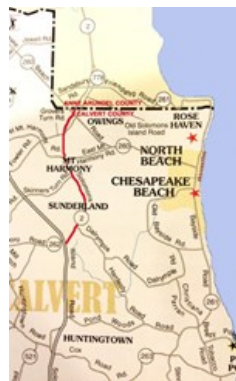
Name the new community center in Prince Frederick the *Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center*;

Name a stretch of Maryland Route 2 the *Harriet Elizabeth Brown Memorial Highway*; and



Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center

Commission a portrait of Ms. Brown to hang in the Court House.



The stretch (red) of Maryland Route 2 to become the *Harriet Elizabeth Brown Memorial Parkway*.

As this article goes to press, the first recommendation (naming the community center) has been done, the second (naming the highway) is underway, and a fund has been

established through the Calvert Community Foundation to raise funds to commission the Court House portrait.

With these activities and ample local press coverage, awareness of Harriet Elizabeth Brown's significance is rising. It will surely grow even more with full implementation of the Task Force's three recommendations.

Harriet Elizabeth Brown Joins the League

Perhaps anticipating a doubling of her \$600 annual salary, Harriet Elizabeth Brown joined the NAACP for \$1.00 as her case was filed in 1937.

Three decades later, in 1968, she and her sister Regina (also a distinguished local educator) joined the League of Women Voters of Calvert County. The year before, President Johnson appointed her no-longer-rookie attorney, Thurgood Marshall, to be the first African-American Supreme Court Justice.



Harriet Elizabeth Brown, age 98. Photo courtesy of Frances Dunkle Poling

While some of the African-American teachers in other Maryland counties, who sought equal pay, were fired or tricked out of their jobs, Harriet Elizabeth Brown remained in Calvert County as a respected educator for her entire teaching career. She retired around 1970 to become an active community member, passing away in 2009, just weeks short of her 102nd birthday.

Harriet Elizabeth Brown changed history. She showed incredible personal courage to be the named plaintiff in this case. That is something for all Calvert Countians, indeed all Marylanders, to celebrate.

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industry. A timely approval could mean other future Atlantic offshore wind projects would utilize Maryland's investments in infrastructure and a skilled workforce.

Denmark was the first mover in Europe on offshore wind. In doing so, it developed offshore wind expertise and infrastructure and has become the hub for offshore wind projects in Europe. Maryland has an opportunity to also do this.

The good news is the federal government has already leased over 1 million acres of offshore wind area on the East Coast. Maryland's area includes 80,000 acres. Because of our central location in the Mid-Atlantic it will be an ideal hub for supporting other offshore wind projects. However, other states, like Massachusetts, are not far behind Maryland in large offshore wind project development. If they move forward first, Maryland will miss this opportunity to become the hub. US Wind, the Maryland offshore wind area leaseholder, plans to make a \$2.5 billion investment in Maryland to jumpstart a net export economy.

The League supported offshore wind because it is a key part of transitioning our nation off dirty energy sources like coal and toward our clean energy future. Diversifying the east coast's energy mix is critical for protecting ratepayers from price spikes in the volatile fossil fuel markets. Natural gas prices are volatile and the cost of coal is increasing. There is no fuel cost for offshore wind. Offshore wind produces the most energy when we need it the most – during hot summer days and cold winters. Today, utilities must use the dirtiest and costliest sources of power to supply those periods of peak demand.

Maryland is well on its way to bringing offshore wind to the Free State; however, the Public Service Commission needs to

approve an Offshore Renewable Energy Credit proposal this year that meets the law's requirements. We will weigh in on the proposal this fall to help make sure this happens. If there is any breakdown in this process, we will be looking to advocates to help us get the project back on track.

SPOTLIGHT ON RALPH WATKINS

By Barbara Schnackenberg

League members in Maryland may not know that Ralph is our statewide Voter Service Chairman. During the past year of his service, he has worked extensively to find funding for publication of local print Voters' Guides through grants from businesses and foundations. He undertook this work in addition to training Local League members on Vote 411, providing guidance on candidate forums and a wide variety of other tasks. He has a strong passion for redistricting reform, and is our principal chef for our "Gerrymander Cake" Here is some of the background that gives rise to his interests.

If one were going to raise a child with a future in voter service, one might want to be



Ralph Watkins

sure to start by taking him with you to vote. This is especially true if you grow up in northwest Ohio and your parents vote in a voting booth that stays in a shed in the bed of a wagon all

year around. In fact, when your parents vote, you and they must climb into the wagon bed, which someone pulls into the center of town on voting day but it resides inside a storage area between elections. Just imagine what an impression that would make on a young person!

Ralph Watkins' parents made sure to

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encourage him to follow their interest in public affairs and to see voting was an essential part of that interest. For Ralph, becoming an attorney was an outgrowth of his parents' early encouragement and his own interest in economic justice issues. He graduated from the American University Washington College of Law where he also became interested in international human rights.

Ralph's career began with a legal position with the Church of the Brethren where he worked on refugee resettlement and other immigration issues. By the time of his retirement, he was working in the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. Most people probably know the courts from the decisions handed down by various levels of the court system. In fact, administering the court system—any part of it—presents a challenge to keep costs in check and to present to the legislative branch a budget which can be seen as reasonable. Yes, even the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court must present and argue for funding. And sometimes the Congress is unimpressed with the Court's decisions.

Working on election issues and joining the League became possible for Ralph in 1975 when the League of Women Voters voted to include men in our organization. Ralph's interest in the League began through the Voters' Guide in Dayton, Ohio. From his point of view, the American government is the only one in the world which offers citizens the opportunity to peacefully restructure our government whenever we believe our current system is not working.



Gerrymander Cake Chef

In other countries of the world, such change is impossible without the overthrow of an existing system.

Ralph does argue for a change in the name of the League of Women Voters to some other name that does not seem to exclude a major part of our national community. One possible name might be the Maryland Voters League or something similar. Such a change raises issues such as copyright law (for our organizational name, logo, etc.) He does not have a ready solution for these issues but does believe they can be solved.

Taking an interest in international affairs is something Ralph believes the League can and should do. After all women do not have the right to vote everywhere and certainly are not treated well everywhere. If we adopted an international agenda, we could encourage education and economic independence for women everywhere. In addition, we should make better use of social media. Instead of using written fact sheets, we should use video with questions and face-to-face discussions. More and better use of general public participation would improve our visibility and educate the electorate.

One fact not all League members know is that not all local leagues take part in the studies that serve as the basis of our policy positions. Ralph's advice: We also need to make better use of experts in the fields we study, perhaps using retirees with expertise who can help us develop our policy positions. Our studies should include people in addition to our members; an informed debate will help raise awareness.

Thank you, Ralph, for all your dedication to voter education and improving voter turnout.