

Voter



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LWVMD 2017 Legislative Priorities

By Ruth Crystal, LWVMD Director



Each year, local Leagues identify the priorities they think are most important for the legislative session. The state League reviews those, adds priorities it thinks are key, and selects the most frequently identified issues as LWVMD priorities.

The issues selected must be based on a position held by either LWVMD or the US League. While these issues are our priority, nineteen 'Report from State Circle' reporters follow many other issues, and the League supports our priority issues with testimony and action alerts as well as other issues we have studied and reached consensus to support or oppose.

The state League's public policy positions are identified in 'STUDY and ACTION' available on the LWVMD website (lwvmd.org), the LWVUS position are summarized in STUDY and ACTION, and explained in 'IMPACT ON ISSUES' available on LWVUS website (lwv.org).

Our priorities for 2017 fall in three categories:

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK include:

Redistricting reform, and

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Cuba: November 2016

By Jane Hardy, LWVMD Director

My husband and I spent two weeks in Cuba in early November of this year. Before visiting, our preconceptions of Cuba were probably like those of most of us:

Communism, Castro, dictatorship, old cars, embargo, missile crisis, Guantanamo, Hemingway, Buena Vista Social Club, etc. We returned with keen respect for a

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Improved voter access

PROTECTING the ENVIRONMENT include:

- Mitigating climate change
- Reliance on clean Renewable energy, and
- Safe water for all

PROMOTING SOCIAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE include:

- Maintaining the safety net for vulnerable populations
- Corrections and sentencing reform, and
- Adequate public transportation funding

You can read about bills concerning these and other significant subjects by subscribing to [Report from State Circle](#), issued six times during the legislative session. We will send ACTION ALERTS when it is important for you to call your legislators and express your personal support or opposition to bills.

Maryland Voters Served

By Ralph Watkins, Chair, Voter Service



LWV volunteers' service to voters in Maryland started at the beginning - registering new citizens to vote. At naturalization ceremonies in the U.S. courthouses in Baltimore and Greenbelt and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service office in Baltimore, from January 1 to October 30, we registered 1,285 new voters!

LWV volunteers across Maryland performed outstanding service to our fellow citizens through publishing [Voters' Guides](#)

and conducting candidate forums for a wide range of offices and ballot questions. Many local Leagues were able to print and distribute copies of their *Voters' Guides* and all local *Guides* were available in printable (pdf) files on the LWVMD website. The *Voters' Guide* information was also available at our online service, VOTE411.org. Through the efforts of several volunteers (especially Alice Giles, Barbara Crain, Elaine Apter, Nancy Soreng, and Mary Lanigan), pdf versions of *Voters' Guides* for counties without a local League were posted on the website as well. The result - LWV covered every office and ballot question in every county in Maryland!

League members organized forums with candidates for the U.S. Senate (at Chesapeake College and the University of Baltimore), several congressional races, boards of education in several counties, and some local ballot questions. It was particularly helpful to voters that eight of these were recorded on video and made available through links on the LWVMD website. Video recording is a growth opportunity for League forums, and every League is encouraged to make connections with community access television stations or local colleges for filming future forums. We owe special thanks to Nancy Smith and Linda Rittelman for their work on the Senate candidates forums.

Please **thank your Voters Service workers** for their efforts. I especially want to thank the following Leaguers who endured my phone calls and emails (and others who did a great deal of work and I did not happen to contact): Niecy Chambers and Susan Elson (Anne Arundel); Linda

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Rittelman and Lois Hybl (Baltimore City); Barbara Crain and Petrea Macdonald (Baltimore County); John Perryman (Calvert); Sarah Matthews (Frederick); Eileen Coffee, Peg Hill, and Theresa Freligh (Harford); Lillie Gallant and Debra Taylor (Howard); George Shivers and Nancy Smith (Kent); Pat Comella and Mary Beth Goll (MidShore); Elaine Apter, Mary Lanigan, and Barbara Sanders (Montgomery); Dorothy Ginter and Stacie Johnson (Prince George's); Michelle Vaughn (Saint Mary's), and Richard Willson (Washington). Janeen Grohsmeyer, formerly of Saint Mary's County LWV, provided critical support for the downloading of VOTE411 data to produce the *Voters' Guides* (she may have left Maryland but she certainly did not leave the League).

Several League members had fun making videos to promote the use of the *Voters' Guide* and VOTE411 – Elaine Apter, Donna Copeland, Adrienne Craver, Bee Ditzler, and Sylvia Olivetti (Montgomery), Greg and Kate Sanders (Howard), and John Perryman and Jim Ritter & Dixie Miller (Calvert). Kent Woods and Michael Schwartz, friends in Montgomery County, appeared in the Abe Lincoln video - "[Honest!](#)" Since there were no dates specified in these videos, we can use them again for the 2018 election and perhaps find other ways to promote the *Voters' Guide*.

Remember to celebrate our teammates, election officials and the citizens who selflessly put public service first and ran for office in 2016. What a year!



Policing and Communities of Color

By Lois Hybl,

To educate ourselves and the larger community, the League of Women Voters of Maryland and our co-sponsors the University of Baltimore, Schaefer Center for Public Policy, Associated Black Charities and the Maryland Association of Non-Profit Organizations presented the forum, *Exploring the Dynamics between Police and Communities of Color: Where Do We Go from Here?*, on November 19 at the University of Baltimore, H. Mebane Turner Learning Commons. University President Kurt Schmoke moderated the event.

Current Climate

Dr. Benjamin Wright of the School of Criminal Justice, and a former policeman, gave an overview of the current climate for policing in the "Lay of the Land."

The 1896 [Plessy v. Ferguson](#) Supreme Court Decision legalizing separate but equal facilities, Jim Crow, segregated schools, craft union discrimination and "red lining" of neighborhoods by realtors contributed to the segregation and social problems affecting policing today.

When government and social agencies can't solve the problems of low graduation rates, increasing homelessness, a poor education product, high unemployment and broken homes, police departments --open 24/7--are left to cope.

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proud but impoverished country. Then, on November 25th, less than two weeks after our return, Fidel, the revolutionary leader, died at age 90. How to make sense of this? What is likely to happen?

Travel to Cuba from the U.S. is regulated by the [Office of Foreign Assets Control \(OFAC\)](#), part of the Treasury Department. This is the means by which the U.S. embargo of Cuba has been administered since the early 1960s. (It is worth noting every year since 1992 the UN General Assembly has passed a resolution condemning the embargo, declaring it to be in violation of its charter and international law. Only the U.S. and Israel have voted against the resolutions in recent years; this year both abstained!) Despite some very recent easing (you can now bring home more cigars and rum) travel to Cuba remains constrained. There are 12 permissible reasons for travel to Cuba under the embargo. (Bottom line: It is not permitted for U.S. tourists to park themselves at Cuban resorts and lounge by the pool, snorkel in the Caribbean, and sip mojitos all day.)

We traveled as part of a [“People-to-People”](#) program. As such, each day had scheduled, documented cultural exchange activities. We are required by OFAC to keep these records for five years.

Some of these People-to-People activities we experienced were visits to:

National School of Dance

Museum of Literacy

Museum of Fine Arts

Museum of the Revolution

An adult learning program at Havana University

An eldercare facility

An agricultural cooperative in Havana

A major Biosphere Reserves for sustainable development

Bay of Pigs area, with narration

A CDR, Committee for Defense of the Revolution

A ballet performance of Don Quixote

A talk on Cuba’s economy and prospects for Cuban-U.S. relations

Through these visits, we were very aware Cuba is a socialist country, and we saw both positive and negative aspects. Education, including the arts, is universal, very high quality, and free. Healthcare is universal, very high quality, and free. The population seemed comfortably diverse. Two years of national service is required of young people, both male and female (only one year if the young person is pursuing a medical degree). We were not aware of any police or military presence. Fabulous music and dance are pervasive. (A tip for future travelers: Take a Salsa lesson before you go, even if it is on YouTube).

On the other hand, evidence of limited financial resources and material shortage is everywhere. Food and staples are rationed. There is no “retail” beyond the basics, no streets lined with shops. Roads and buildings are old and tired. Fully half of vehicles date to the 1950s. This all seems charming and rustic at first, but is really a sign of long deferred maintenance. Manual labor predominates on farms; we saw hand

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-cultivating and harvesting activities that would be mechanized here. Farms are small by government policy.

Following the Revolution in 1959, with its takeover of U.S. corporate interests and the exodus of opposition Cubans to the U.S., primarily to South Florida, and the subsequent losing attempt at regime change at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, the U.S. imposed an almost complete economic embargo on Cuba. Countering the embargo, the Cuban economy was sustained largely by the USSR until 1989. When the USSR collapsed, the situation for Cuba became dire. Cuba has an agricultural economy, with limited industry or natural resources. For over twenty-five years, foreign investment in Cuba has been minimal. The U.S. embargo remains in effect and, [for complex domestic political reasons, is unlikely to be lifted anytime soon.](#)

Despite the squeeze from the U.S., we came away from our trip to Cuba impressed with the country's commitment to the national experiment begun by the Revolution. People we met (People-to-People activities, above) were proud of what they had accomplished, and revered Fidel. There will be much grieving for his loss, but I would predict no significant change to the governance. Raul is in charge as elected President, though he, too, is old. Behind him is a National Assembly made up of elected representatives from the provinces and their sub-divisions. We were told new leadership will emerge in an orderly manner.

The system, as best I understand it, is a [one-party, popular democracy.](#) I know

there are some contradictions in that statement, at least in our eyes. But I did not get any sense of a desire to change their system. No Second Revolution. No catastrophic leadership vacuum due to Fidel's death. One widespread wish I can attest to is to have the embargo lifted – see the photo of a roadside billboard from a rural crossroad.



Despite the billboard message, many Cubans we met expressed great admiration for President Barack Obama, because of the recent thawing of official enmity.

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In programs such as “Policing in a Multicultural Society” trainees learn **Awareness** of their own identities and attitudes, **Knowledge** about police misconduct and the varied experiences communities have had with police, and **Skills** to deal with people in a culturally informed way with respect and empathy.

POLICE PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Wright also served as moderator for the Police Perspective Panel with Chief Ganesha Martin, Department of Justice Compliance and Accountability for the Baltimore City Police Department, and Chief of Police William Harden of Pocomoke City. Chief Martin emphasized the need for accountability—protesters, police, community (including young people) and politicians, as they work to implement changes required by the Department of Justice Consent Decree.

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The department has brought police and community members together to determine what data is useful to both for eventual posting to a police website. They have invited citizens to observe trial boards. They are looking at recruitment, training, supervision and audits of body cameras to insure social justice and equity concepts are incorporated and policies become practice.

Chief Harden explained the small size of his department allows him to receive complaint paperwork directly, and he deals with many of the same problems. He stressed the importance of treating citizens with respect. His department is trying to bring training in line with Maryland Training Commission recommendations. He pointed to the Seattle Police Department as a model for transparency because complaints can be followed from beginning to end on their website. In his opinion, ideally, there would be a national traveling prosecutor for brutality complaints.

PROSECUTOR PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Roger Hartley, University of Baltimore College of Public Affairs, discussed the prosecutor perspective with Elizabeth Embry, Chief of the Criminal Division in the Maryland Office of the Attorney General. Ms. Embry stressed a good police chief wants aggressive prosecution of misconduct. She noted New York State has a traveling prosecutor. Montgomery County and Howard County prosecute each other's cases.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

On the Community Perspective Panel,

moderated by A. Adar Ayira, Program Director at Associated Black Charities, the forum heard from the Reverend Todd Yeary of the NAACP, Marion Gray Hopkins, Victim Advocate; Andrea Harrison, Maryland New Directions and Lydia Walther Rodriguez, CASA de Maryland. They emphasized police-community relations were not a matter of just getting along, but systemic changes were needed because current systems impede justice.

According to the panel, it was important to recognize the difference in power between police and community. They said Black-on-Black crime is no excuse for unconstitutional practices by police. They claimed the history of policing included different styles of policing used in different neighborhoods. Ms. Hopkins' described her son's killing by police in Prince George's County. She claimed many cases are not covered by media, and the media sensationalized some cases and did not cover them equitably.

Lydia Walther-Rodriguez said many immigrants feel dehumanized by police and the media. She still hears people are asked about their immigration status which she said was contrary to the Baltimore mayor's executive order. The panel posited community activists don't intend to wage a war on police. They just want an equal opportunity to thrive. In their opinion, the most important attributes are transparency and accountability, including trained citizens on police review boards.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

For an update of Legislative Actions Current and Future, Toni Holness, Public Policy Counsel, Maryland ACLU,

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moderated a panel including Lawrence Grandpre, Director of Research, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle (LBS) and the Honorable Alonzo Washington, Delegate to the Maryland General Assembly. They reported the General Assembly had little appetite for police reform until the Baltimore riots in April 2015. Then a work group was appointed, and some changes passed in 2016.

Mr. Grandpre reported the time limit to file complaints increased, and the time before police could be questioned decreased. However, legislation only enabled, but did not require, citizens on police review boards.

LBS would like to strengthen the legislation by requiring a City Council subcommittee vet citizens who want to be on the review board. A police chief would then appoint citizens for review boards from recommended candidates.

Mr. Grandpre stressed if police are acting in the name of people who pay their salaries, they should be subject to civilian review. In his opinion, change is difficult because police unions claim expertise and have money and influence to advance legislation while individual citizens can't easily spend time at committee hearings. He also said legislators fear losing union endorsements.

Delegate Washington described the personal lobbying effort it took to pass his bill to require reporting of deaths by police action in the 2015 General Assembly session. The panelists recommended citizens develop relationships with legislators and bring young people to meet and talk to

legislators.

In his "Vision for Community Policing", Major (Ret) Neill Franklin, Executive Director, Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, recommended healthy communities with good health care, education and jobs. He believes policing has not changed enough from the days of slave patrols and police are a stopgap for policy failures and disinvestment in communities of color. He was especially critical of the "War on Drugs" which he claimed dated from deliberate planning in the Nixon administration to disenfranchise Vietnam war protestors and people of color through tough sentences for drug possession and dealing. Dayvon Love, Director of Public Policy, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, made a plea for more funding for programs such as "Safe Streets" which employs former prisoners to mediate conflicts. He emphasized civilian oversight was essential so communities did not have to rely only on police to police themselves. He asserted the Fraternal Order of Police should be asked to defend their policies.

The [video](#) of the forum is posted on our website, www.lwvmd.org under "News".

Constitution Day Program: Election 2016

By Andrea Morris Gruhl,
LWVMD Director for
Constitution Day



"Election 2016 and the Structural Constitution" was the topic of our **10th Annual Constitution Day Program** held in the Ceremonial Court Room of the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law. It was co-sponsored by League of Women Voters of Maryland, University of Maryland, Baltimore and the school of law,

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University of Maryland, College Park, University of Maryland College of Behavioral & Social Sciences, and the University of Maryland MLaw Programs.

The program began at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 15, 2016 and was [simultaneously available on YouTube](#). Max Stearns, Associate Dean and Professor of Law at Carey, welcomed attendees filling the court room. Forty-six Leaguers across Maryland RSVP'd and a similar number of Carey Law students and College Park pre-law students plus faculty attended. Professor Stearns introduced three panelists, Professor Larry Gibson and Professor Paula Monopoli, both on the Carey Law School faculty, and Professor Robert Koulisch, Director of MLaw Programs at the university's College Park campus.

Max Stearns framed the topic reminding all of the electoral college dictums found in the US Constitution's 12th Amendment. Stearns presented a continuum regarding the "median voter" and described the median Democrat and the median Republican. He noted the importance of the Anti-Establishment Voter as a characteristic of this election and said 44% of the electorate in the 2016 Primary Election based their vote on being Anti-Establishment. The approach of a relevant tipping point can be discerned in advance.

Professor Larry Gibson said structural constitutions promote the two-party system. States decide how to shape their election districts and how to do the electoral college. He remarked the current election campaigning is entertaining. An outsider has a better

chance when a large field of candidates is running. Sanders has articulated a progressive ideology in his campaign. 2016 Election campaign characteristics differ in the North, East, South and West of the US.

Professor Paula Monopoli said this presidential election season features the first viable female candidate. She thought "[The Gender Gap](#)" was a feature of this election. She cited Alexander Hamilton's view on the importance of "the energy of the candidate." It is a view favoring men. Presiding over the family is the male norm. Women are more intuitive and typically have a more feminine philosophy of sharing power. She also examined the concept of Direct Popular Elections.

Professor Robert Koulisch spoke of the Framers' view of US elections. People need to vote now although they are not enthusiastic about the candidates. State legislators are in the sway of the elites. Establishment candidates won the Primaries handily. Koulisch asked, "What do the political science models tell you about who will win this presidential election?" Voters are angry. One of the nastiest presidential elections in US history was in 1828 between the feminine, nice John Quincy Adams and the rough Andrew Jackson. This 2016 election has unique "celebrity candidates", and he cited the need for substantive debates. The dominant characteristic of this presidential campaign was basal animal hatred.

After a vigorous Question and Answer session the audience of Leaguers, guests, law and pre-law students and faculty enjoyed a reception.

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
and our many co-sponsoring organizations invite you to the

SAVE THE DATE! **WLB** Women's Legislative Briefing **2017**

NEW VISIONS, NEW VOICES:
Charting the Course for Our Future

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2017

TIME: Doors Open at 11:30 am, Program 12:30–6 pm
LOCATION: The Universities at Shady Grove, Bldg II
9630 Gudelsky Drive, Rockville, Maryland

General Admission Registration begins at 11:30 am with light refreshments. The conference begins with an **opening ceremony and greetings**. **Compelling seminars** on legislation in the Maryland General Assembly will fill out the afternoon. A **reception** will conclude the event providing an opportunity to meet with county and state elected officials, advocates and representatives of the most prominent county, state and national women's organizations.

Sign language interpreter services will be provided only upon request with notice as far in advance as possible, but no less than 72 hours prior to the event. If these or other services or aids are needed to participate in this activity, please call 240-777-8333 or email a request to Jodi.Finkelstein@montgomerycountymd.gov.

AGAIN THIS YEAR:
Special Seminars for Emerging Leaders in Grades 7-12!

Registration Opens November 1!
Co-sponsorship and Exhibit Table Opportunities

For more information, please contact the Montgomery County Commission for Women at 240.777.8333
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw

LWVMD Sponsors Women

Legislative Briefing

By Nancy Soreng
Co-President

Once again, the League of Women Voters of Maryland will be a co-sponsor of The Women's Legislative Briefing (WLB).

It is the longest-standing women's legislative event in the state of Maryland. The Montgomery County Commission for Women coordinates it, and brings together advocates, policy makers, and emerging leaders to empower, engage, and mobilize

Marylanders throughout the state around matters affecting women, girls and families.

History and Purpose:

The Montgomery County Commission for Women organized the first Women's Legislative Briefing in January 1980, co-sponsored by 12 community and women's organizations. With the exception of 1982, the briefing occurs annually, making last year the 36th anniversary of this event.

The purpose of the briefing is to provide information on legislative activities, including bills in the upcoming sessions of the Maryland General Assembly and U.S. Congress. Local and state officials attend, enhancing our reach. The ending reception allows participants the opportunity to meet with their legislators and discuss their concerns.

Tickets can be purchased by clicking the poster above, or going to <http://bit.ly/2gIfFt8>.