

League of Women Voters Howard County

Program Report - April 23, 2019

Presented at the Annual Meeting by Thea Jones, Vice-President and Program Chair

All discussion of Principles and Program of the League of Women Voters Howard County (LWVHC) begins with our bylaws. (See Article IX. on pages 16 of the LWVHC 2018-2019 Handbook.)

By-laws Into Action: Although the LWVHC can and does use the position statements from the LWVUS, the LVWMD and the LWVNCA, Program Planning is needed to determine the need for **revision of our own positions**. Also, **members discuss the possible need for new studies that may be important to Howard County**. (See 9.02 and 9.03 of Article IX.) Input from members takes place annually at the Unit Meetings which are held at least two months before our Annual Meeting. The revision of positions and any new studies must be adopted by members at the Annual Meeting which is held in April. Advocacy begins with the positions which are adopted by the League through study and knowledge of League positions.

1. **Revision of Positions.** At the March Unit Meetings, members reviewed the current LWVHC positions for update, retention, editing for clarity, or deletion and recommended that all positions be retained with the following exception:
Under "Government" remove the section titled "Municipal Incorporation Criteria"
2. **Topics suggested for Study.** At the March Unit Meetings, members suggested the following topics for possible "Study" in 2019 – 2020:
 - a. Fees as opposed to taxes with attention to what services might be affected by fees, e.g., social/fitness activities without the elimination of access by less wealthy.
 - b. Historic Districts - What is involved in an historic district such as Ellicott City or Lawyer's Hill
 - c. Public financing of campaigns for all Howard County offices
 - d. Patterns of Voter Registration in Howard County to determine the demographics of unregistered voters in the county, e.g., location, type of housing, age, et. al. to guide our efforts for the 2020 election year both in registration and in forming coalitions
 - e. What is a "Homeowner's Association" and should Columbia be changed from a Homeowner's Association to something else? If so, what are the options? What are the implications?

Report on LWVHC Program for 2018-2019 as of March 17, 2019

April 2018: At the Annual General Meeting no year-long program was approved and no studies were proposed. A program director was appointed with approval from LWVHC members.

July 2018: At the annual retreat of the Board of Directors the *2018-2019 Calendar of Meetings and Events* was presented and topics for Unit Meetings in September, October, and March were included.

September 2018:

1. There was a short review of the purpose of Unit Meetings:

Consensus and Action:

- To determine consensus on program topics to be determined at annual meeting.
- To determine consensus on legislative issues to be taken at local, state, and national levels.

- Once consensus is reached, a position on an issue is identified and the LWV uses these positions to advocate at all levels of government.

Education:

- To learn more about topics of interest to League members through presentations by League members and other members of the Howard County community.
 - To share ideas and information of interest to all league members.
2. The 2018 Legislative and Budget Priorities of the LWVMD were reviewed, discussed and edited. Final prioritizing was completed, approved and submitted to the LWVMD by the due date of September 25, 2018. The State Board then adopted the statewide priorities at their November board meeting and published a leaflet of priorities which all Maryland Leagues used to work with state legislators prior to and during the 2019 General Assembly.

October 2018:

1. The 2018 General Election Ballot Questions were discussed:
Question 1: Gambling and Education – Dedicating certain gambling revenue to education.
Question 2: Elections – Authorizes the legislature to enact laws allowing for same-day voter registration.
The Howard County Charter Amendment
2. Information on the LWWNCA was presented by the LWVHC liaison, Andrea Gruhl
3. An introduction to the Priority Issues of the LWVUS was presented using the 2018-2019 Handbook. Issues and priorities will not be reviewed by the LWVHC until the fall of 2019.
4. An overview of the LWVUS Lobby Corp was presented by longtime leader, Carole Connors.

November 2018: There was not a formal Unit Meeting in November, but LWVHC members were urged to attend one of three Gerrymandering 101 workshops which were made available through a grant to the LWVMD. Outstanding presentations were made by LWVHC Co-President, Beth Hufnagel. The meetings were excellent sources of information for members as we prepared to advocate for changes in redistricting in Maryland. Over fifty League and community members attended the workshops.

January 2019: The topic for both Unit Meetings was “Death with Dignity” as we were asked, by the LWVMD, to discuss and decide on consensus on this important topic. It had not yet become the End of Life Options Bill, but after discussion we reached unanimous consensus in favor of the proposed bill. The two position statements read:

- The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes state laws should grant the option for a terminally ill person to request medical assistance from a relevant, licensed physician to end one’s life.
- The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes such legislation should include safeguards against abuse for the dying and/or medical personnel.

The results of our concurrence were relayed to the LWVMD as directed. We were fortunate to have Sally Hunt from the Montgomery County League give an excellent presentation to us.

February 2019: The February Unit Meeting had to be rescheduled because of inclement weather, however the rescheduled meeting was an outstanding presentation and discussion on environmental issues facing Howard County and Maryland by the LWVHC’s Environment Director, Betsy Singer.

Topics that were discussed included the *Clean Energy Jobs Act*, the *Pipeline Safety Act*, the ban on polystyrene foam food packaging and forest conservation. There was an excellent Q & A and lots of animated participation by those in attendance.

Also in February, an electronic survey was completed for the LWNCA as they were seeking input for their 2019-2021 Program Planning and the deadline for submission was prior to our Unit Meeting date. Member response was tabulated and shared at the February Board of Directors meeting, approved and reported to the LWNCA as requested. Thank you to League members who participated electronically.

March 2019: Agenda items for the March Unit Meetings included the following:

- LWHC Positions and Program Planning/Studies. Suggestions were made and will be voted on at the April Annual Meeting. They will be used to give guidance to the Program Director and the Board of Directors as planning is completed for Unit Meetings during the 2019-2020 League year which begins in September of 2019.
- Bail Reform. The concepts of the study introduced in the LWMD Bail Reform Fact Sheet were presented through a PowerPoint and attendees responded to the consensus questions. The results were submitted to the LWMD on March 22, 2019.

Members of the LWHC are encouraged to become involved in the basic activity of the League - Unit Meetings. There are opportunities for involvement in Unit Meetings either as attendees or presenters. Suggestions for speakers, tours, venues for meetings or anything that will help us grow as informed and active members of the League are welcomed. Please contact Thea Jones at tjones89@comcast.net