

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of Baltimore County



Volume 2019-2020 Issue 2
October - November 2019

Newsletter

CALENDAR



In this issue:

Calendar	1
From The Co-Presidents.....	2
New Members.....	3
LWVMD	3
Committees and Reports	4
Programming and Events	8
CIVIC ED FACT SHEETS.....	12-19
Board of Directors	20

October

- 3 – 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Board meeting
- 16 – 19 [Crusading Mrs. Catt debut](#) @ Charm City Fringe Festival
- 22 – 7 p.m. Student Support Network Fundraiser, Goucher College.
www.StudentSupportNetwork.org
- 24 – 6 p.m. Baltimore County Forum on Civics Education [The Coalition for the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future](#), Woodlawn Middle School, 3033 St. Luke’s Ln, Baltimore
- 28 – County Council Hearing on HOME Act
- 28 – 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. *America’s Greatest Spy*, Maryland Women’s History Center
<https://mdwomensheritagecenter.org/>
- 30 – 2 p.m. LWV People Powered Fair Maps webinar
<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/6741268918769887245>



November

- 3 – 10 a.m. LWVBCo Board Meeting
- 13 – 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, Study: “State of Civics Education in Maryland Schools”, Broadmead Community
- 15 – Friday, 10 a.m., Study: “State of Civics Education in Maryland Schools”, Charlestown Retirement Community, Charlestown Square Room 116
- 16 – 7:30 p.m., Book Club, Betsy Sexton’s home
- 16 – 2 p.m. – 4 p.m., *Baltimore Suffrage History* program, Waverly Branch, Enoch Pratt Free Library, 400 East 33rd Street

December

- 3 – Giving Tuesday: Donate to your league

January 2020

- 4 – Noon Legislative Luncheon

April 2020

- 28 – Maryland Primary: Time to Vote



LWV Baltimore County:

Empowering residents through voter registration, education and advocacy.

FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS

Dear League Members,

A central tenant underlying the work of the League of Women Voters is the principle of fair and open elections. The citizen's right to vote is fundamental to democracy. Voting and elections are controlled in the United States at the local levels of governments. There are eight to ten thousand election districts, many in rural areas. As a result, the experience of voting even in national elections is experienced differently in different states and local jurisdictions.



In comparison to other states, we in Maryland are progressive in extending the privilege of voting to most Marylanders including minorities, former felons, and others who are often targeted with voter suppression efforts. However, one danger does exist here as well as elsewhere and that is outside interference. That interference is known to have occurred in the 2016 election and it is presumed that the danger of foreign governments using social media, as well as other means, to influence the 2020 election still exists.

What is necessary to combat outside interference includes up-grading voter machines so there is a paper trail as well as an electronic one; up to date and secure voter registration databases; and adequate and well-trained election officials. Currently in Congress several bills to provide funding for election protection are awaiting action. The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University estimates that state and local agencies would need nearly \$2.2 billion over the next five years to adequately shield elections from tampering. The bills in Congress add modestly to the \$630 million already appropriated¹.

Given that time is short and funding inadequate, what can the League do as we strive to fulfill our mission to empower voters and defend democracy. Already underway is the planning for our Voter's Guide to the primary that will take place on April 28, 2020. We continue to work on voter registration and will again monitor the polls. We remain a source of impartial information consistent with our policy positions developed through consensus. We have committed to more activity on the local level and will publish a monthly report in the Voter reflecting the goings on in the County Council and County Government. Though none are necessary this year, when there are local elections, we hold forums so that candidates can speak directly to voters and detail their positions on issues of interest. A luncheon with the Baltimore County state delegation is scheduled for January 4, 2020.

Our goal is to keep our members and others informed. The reason to be concerned about the integrity of voting systems is part of our quest to make sure that we all can have confidence in the outcome of our elections and that those who are elected are those who won within the boundaries of the law. Public discussion of the issues, access to the candidates and vigilance are mandatory for an informed electorate. Equally important is that we can trust that every vote is counted accurately, and an election is not corrupted either by enemies to our democracy from within or without.

Sincerely,

Co-Presidents

Theresa Lawler

Camille Wheeler

¹ *The New York Times*, September 26, 2019, p.A19.

NEW MEMBERS

Proud Past, Bright Future

John E. David, PhD
Gloria Davis
William Kladky
Pat Novak



David Pittinger
Lillian Shore
Janice Serovich
Linda Sordillo

LWVMD

REPORT ON LWV OF MARYLAND'S FALL WORKSHOP

Betsy Sexton and Barbara Crain



The League of Women Voters of Maryland held its Fall Workshop at Wilde Lake Interfaith Center in Columbia on Saturday, September 28. The Baltimore County League had a good contingent in attendance: Barbara Crain, Susan Hullinger, Phyl Lansing, Terri Lawler, Eleanor Lewis, Camille Marx, Tracy Miller, Phyllis Panopoulos, Ann Phillips, Ginny Probasco and Betsy Sexton.

We were briefed on the LWVMD study “Civic Education in Maryland”, a fact-finding activity concerning the status of civic education in counties across the state. This information will be presented to our membership next month. We hope you will read the Fact Sheets at the end of this *Voter* issue and attend one of our **discussion meetings in November** (see calendar on page 1).

There was also a session on the national League’s (LWVUS’s) proposed Concurrence on Voting Process. This concerns a complex revision to the LWVUS position on Elections and Voting Procedures nationwide that is being recommended by the national League board. We will be scheduling **January meetings** to present the concurrence statement and discuss whether we believe Maryland should vote to adopt the statements. This is a topic at the heart of our mission, so please watch *The Voter* for details.

The third workshop was called “Revenue Options for Funding Kirwan and Messaging for Best Practices”. Camille Marx’s summary, *The Kirwan Commission*, is on page 7 of this *Voter*.

Our luncheon speaker was Adrienne A. Jones, 107th Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, who conveyed an inspiring message. Delegate Jones is the first woman and the first African American to serve as a presiding officer in the Maryland General Assembly. She represents Baltimore County District 10 and is a former member of LWV of Baltimore County.

LWV BALTIMORE COUNTY COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

GIVING TUESDAY

“GIVING TUESDAY” AND CHANGING CULTURAL NORMS AND THINKING ABOUT GIVING TO NONPROFITS

Barbara Hopkins

By now, if you haven't donated on **Giving Tuesday**, you've probably at least heard about it. It aims to bring together nonprofits, businesses, and individuals across the world to raise awareness and funds. It occurs only on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, which this year is December 3.

Giving Tuesday was created by the 92nd Street Y in New York City in 2012 and focused initially on answering a series of open questions:

*Could social media be used to spread generosity and make giving go viral? Could it change cultural norms and behaviors around giving? Would people want to post about the issues they cared about as much as how many miles they ran that morning or what they ordered for lunch?*²

To this list of questions, I would add another, namely “Can the public get past the myth that the best nonprofits are those that struggle; that keep their operations together with spit, glue, and rubber bands; and still expect to achieve miracles, as if nonprofits were somehow implicated in the Beatitudes of Matthew?”

It turns out that people do want to share nonprofit **Giving Tuesday** campaign information with their peers, in spite of the fact that this nonprofit giving day follows on the heels of Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Museum Monday. Some folks chalk this up to “the holiday spirit”. Who knows what's behind it? The point is that **Giving Tuesday 2017** saw a 69% increase in donations, growing from \$177 million to an impressive \$300 million raised. The average donor gift was \$120.

It's also true that we are finally getting over the idea that nonprofits should be judged on how little they spend on operations versus the outcomes that follow from their efforts. In their 2013 “Letter to the Donors of America”, signaling a shift in thinking about overhead as a measure of nonprofit performance. GuideStar, Charity Navigator and the BBB Wise Giving Alliance underscored its negative impact on communities, noting that “[t]he people and communities served by charities don't need low overhead, they need high performance”.³

² A. Curran. The #GivingTuesday Model. Stanford Social Innovation Review (Fall 2018) https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_givingtuesday_model).

³ LETTER TO THE DONORS OF AMERICA (2013).

A nonprofit leader summarized the challenge this way:

*The irony for the field as a whole is that a technique meant to control costs actually undermines efficiency and program quality. The inability of nonprofits to invest in more efficient management systems, higher skilled managers, training, and program development over time means that as promising programs grow, they are hollowed out, resulting in burned out staff, under-maintained buildings, out of date services, and many other symptoms of inadequately funded “overhead”.*⁴

What does all of this mean for our local League? We have tremendously underfunded “overhead” for too long, in my opinion. There are many things that we should be doing that we are not doing to advance our cause. These things cannot be at the mercy of providing one of our flagship services, publishing the *Voters’ Guide*.



It is also true that we are somewhat timid about asking for money for this all-important and well-loved service. Now, I ask you, what business would give away something that people love? Imagine Steve Jobs deciding to discount the cost of the iPhone because people loved it so much that they were willing to camp out in sleeping bags all night awaiting the debut of the latest model. Ridiculous!

Some may say, “but we are not a business”. Well, I would counter that with “yes, in fact, we are. We are a nonprofit corporation under Maryland law. A major difference between a nonprofit corporation and other corporate entities under our State’s law is that the former does not return a profit to the organization’s shareholders, but rather, reinvests in operations that provide services to meet the organization’s mission.”

We need to invest and re-invest in operations, desperately. But we also need to publish something that people who know us love, namely the *Voters’ Guide*. That’s why, this **Giving Tuesday**, the Baltimore County League of Women Voters will have a campaign focused on raising money for the next iteration of the *Guide* covering the elections of 2020. We will be targeting friends, including non-members, who follow us on social media and email, but we hope everyone will consider making a contribution to this campaign on top of their much-appreciated donations to our annual fund solicitation.



⁴ National Council of Nonprofits, Investing for Impact: *Indirect Costs Are Essential for Success* (September 2013). (<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/sites/default/files/documents/investing-for-impact.pdf>).

ADVOCACY

OPPORTUNITY- HOME ACT

Betsy Sexton

ADVOCACY Opportunity: Our League supports the HOME Act, introduced by County Executive Johnny Olszewski, Jr. on October 7th



This is an opportunity for League members to advocate for legislative change benefitting our community – at your convenience from the comfort of your own home. The League has a longstanding position supporting equal opportunities and access to housing, employment and education. Our members have voted to make the HOME Act a priority issue.

On October 7th, County Executive Olszewski introduced a bill that would add “source of income” to the current Baltimore County Fair Housing Law, making it illegal to discriminate based on a renter’s source of income. Our League, along with many other community organizations, supports the HOME Act, and we will continue to advocate on its behalf by submitting testimony in favor of its passage at the October 29th County Council work session.

The HOME Act (Housing Opportunities Made Equal) addresses a difficulty that some county residents face – being turned away from rental housing solely because of the source of their income. This legislation will open housing opportunities *throughout* the county by giving all residents – including those with Housing Choice Vouchers – **a fair chance to have their rental applications considered.** It would not prevent landlords from verifying applicants’ incomes or checking their rental histories. For working families, it would reduce the time it now takes to find housing and make it easier to move closer to work.

LWV Baltimore County urges Baltimore County to join Anne Arundel, Montgomery, Howard and Frederick Counties as well as Baltimore City to pass legislation that makes it illegal to discriminate based on a renter’s source of income, just as it is illegal to discriminate based on race, sex or religion.

Here is how you, as an individual, can advocate on this important issue.

- Please read the Baltimore Sun Article by clicking on the link below <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-county/bs-md-co-voucher-folo-20191007-ytsu656yajgrfp7hsfepitazdq-story.html>
- Read and pass along the [County Executive’s HOME Act Fact Sheet](#)
- **Then contact your councilperson before the November 4th vote on the bill and urge him/her to support the HOME Act. (Councilman Julian Jones and Councilman Izzy Patoka are in favor of the bill. They also need your support.)**



Questions? Contact Betsy Sexton, esexton2009@gmail.com.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

THE KIRWAN COMMISSION

Camille Marx



The Kirwan Commission aims to create an equitable, world-class education system for Maryland. Statewide averages mark deep inequities in opportunity for certain groups of students. This inequality in outcomes is the direct result of disparities in access to opportunities to learn.

For example:

- Maryland students of color are less likely to have access to early childhood education.
- Nearly half of Black and Latino students attend schools in one of the three most underfunded districts in the state. These students receive about \$4,000 less per student than the Thornton formula says they should. The state must address these inequities in opportunity and achievement by funding all schools to give students equal opportunities.

The Coalition for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future is launching community forums across Maryland to keep pushing for the long-term school funding commitment our students deserve. The forum to help Baltimore County residents understand the Kirwan Commission recommendations will be held at 6:00 p.m. on October 24 at Woodlawn Middle School, 3033 St Luke's Ln, Baltimore, MD 21207.

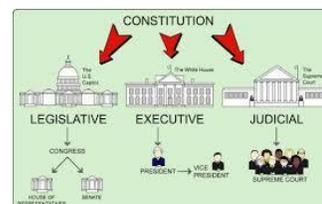
Later, the Baltimore County League of Women Voters will provide information to our members through an informational meeting. If you are interested in improving education in Baltimore County and promoting the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission Report, please contact Camille Marx marx7633@comcast.net. We need everyone to assist in endorsing the conclusions of this report.

The Kirwan Commission's recommendations undoubtedly will dramatically change pre-K–12 education in Maryland. For more information, <http://www.mdcoalition.org/blog/just-what-is-this-kirwan-commission>; the full report is at <https://www.mdpolicy.org/library/doclib/2018/06/An-Analysis-of-the-Kirwan-Commission-Recommendations.pdf>.

STATE LEAGUE STUDY OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN MARYLAND

Betsy Sexton

What do Saturday, September 28; Wednesday, November 13; and Friday, November 15 have in common? All are opportunities to learn about the status of civics education in Maryland schools.



At the State League Workshops on September 28th, we were briefed on the findings of the civics study. We will present the materials at League meetings: **Wednesday, November 13, 9:30–11:30**, at **Broadmead Community**, Fireplace Room; **Friday, November 15, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.** at **Charlestown Retirement Community**, Charlestown Square Room 116.

The 8-page background and informational reports are at the end of this newsletter, pages 12-19. We hope you will join us. This is open to anyone who is interested in the role of education in our democracy. To volunteer or learn more, contact Betsy Sexton, esexton2009@gmail.com

VOTER SERVICES

NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY IN BALTIMORE COUNTY

Barbara Crain



National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) is a national holiday on which volunteers across the country come out to register new voters. This year, NVRD was celebrated on September 24. Across the country, the program helped an estimated 400,000 citizens either register for the first time or update their voter registration. This number was more than three times the previous record set for an “off-year” focused primarily on local elections.

We are glad to say that Baltimore County did its part. LWV member Ginny Probasco and her two volunteers, Noreen Christian and Ken Weeden from Charlestown, went to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in Halethorpe, and, after their naturalization ceremony, registered 34 new voters out of 65 new citizens.



NVRD capped off a busy month for the League at USCIS. Between September 9 and September 24, League members from Baltimore County, along with members of other local leagues and our nonmember volunteers, staffed 10 ceremonies, garnering a total of 241 newly registered voters! Well done!

PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

BCHS AND HSBC 8TH ANNUAL JOINT PROGRAM

Each year in November, the Baltimore City Historical Society and the Historical Society of Baltimore County hold a joint program. For the 2019 version, the societies will join with the Maryland Women’s Heritage Center to investigate *Baltimore Suffrage History*.

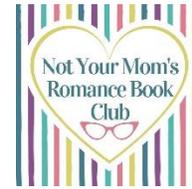


The session will be moderated by renowned historian Jean H. Baker, author of *Sisters: The Lives of America’s Suffragists*. Presenters will be Kacy Rohn, creator of “Maryland Historical Trust: Maryland Women’s Fight for the Vote”, a map tour of people and places of the Maryland women’s suffrage movement, and Diane Weaver, author of *Maryland Women and the Transformation of Politics, 1890s-1930*. This is a free public program with light refreshments.

- Saturday, November 16, 2019
- 2:00 p.m.– 4:00 p.m.
- Waverly Branch, Enoch Pratt Free Library, 400 East 33rd Street

BOOK CLUB READS – FALL SCHEDULE

Our book club is open to everyone and meets at Betsy Sexton's home, 600 Chestnut Avenue in Towson. Feel free to bring a friend for the discussion beginning at 7:30 p.m. Contact esexton2009@gmail.com for directions or more information.



Wednesday, October 16 *The Big Nine: How the Tech Titans and Their Thinking Machines Could Warp Humanity* by Amy Webb

Webb shines a spotlight on the Big Nine: Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook, IBM and Apple (the "G-MAFIA") in the United States, and Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent (the "BAT") in China. The G-MAFIA is beholden to capitalist market forces; the BAT serves the will of the Chinese government.

Wednesday, November 20 *Drawdown: The most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming* by Paul Hawken

Wednesday, December 18 *Shanghai Free Taxi: Journeys with the Hustlers and Rebels of the New China* by Frank Langfitt



LUNCH WITH OUR LEGISLATORS – JOIN US!

Leslie Grant

January 4, 2020 will be upon us before you know it, so mark your calendar for "Lunch with Our Legislators" before they head to Annapolis for the 2020 session. The luncheon will be held at the **Woodbrook Baptist Church, 25 Stevenson Lane, Towson, 21212**. We are most appreciative of Woodbrook's continuing hospitality over many years.

This Legislative Luncheon is our opportunity to meet with legislators, old and new, in a relaxed environment. We will discuss and support the 2020 Legislative Priorities of the Maryland League of Women Voters. (More information on the LWV priorities will be forthcoming in next month's *Voter*).

Bring a friend and spend a couple of hours with your legislator on **Saturday, January 4th** at noon at the Woodbrook Baptist Church. If you would like to bring a salad, side dish or dessert, please let us know. Please call the office (410-377-8046) to RSVP, so we can plan for lunch. Encourage the state legislators who represent your district to attend. Guests are most welcome. We look forward to seeing you on January 4th!



THE CAPITOL STEPS ARE COMING!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS – CAPITOL STEPS

Neilson Andrews

Just before Maryland’s presidential primary this spring, **The Capitol Steps** are coming for our League’s principal four-year fundraiser. They will present a 90-minute concert on **March 29, 2020** at 2:30 p.m. in the Dalsheimer Auditorium of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. We know that seems far away, but mark your calendars now. Tickets will be available shortly, and it will again be open seating. We think our members and guests will like this venue; it provides easy handicapped access and plenty of seating.

Betsy Sexton and Neilson Andrews are working on the preliminary sponsors. WYPR has agreed to be our media sponsor, thanks to great work by Tracy Miller. Sheila Maleson has agreed to help us set up the online ticket sales to commence in November. A Save-the-Date flyer will be available as soon as the online tickets are available.

Betsy and Neilson can always use some help with the fundraising aspects of this event. If you have a potential sponsor that you would be willing to follow up with, please give them a call with the information. Betsy can be reached at 410-821-5014 and Neilson at 410-583-0155. Every bit that we can raise prior to ticket sales will help us fill the coffers for educational programs.

As the event gets closer, we will need help with publicity and distribution of flyers. We will also need ticket sellers, ushers, and other volunteers the day of the event. Please keep a look out in *The Voter* for our pleas for help.



Teamwork is a hallmark of League. Please volunteer!

MEMBER HANDBOOK CHANGES

By now all members should have received the *Member Handbook and Directory*. Please call the office if it has not yet arrived or if your contact information is incorrect.

CONSTITUTION DAY 2019

The Constitution Day program held on September 16th at the UM School of Law provided League members, law students and members of the public an opportunity to hear from UM School of Law professors about what, if any, environmental protections are provided under the US Constitution.

Attending League Members from Charlestown:

Back row: Nancy Amann, Janice Serovich, Noreen Christian, Eleanor Lewis

Front row: Phyl Lansing, Ann Pollitt, Delores Schmitt, Naomi Benzil



Judy Miller asks a question of the presenters.

Food for Baltimore county youth who are on their own and are trying to stay in school

200 backpacks filled with school supplies

Gym uniforms

Food for all of our network school's pantries

800+ pencil pouches/notebooks

Clothing & shoes for students starting work and internships

Clothing for students to stay warm for the upcoming winter

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This chart reflects all that the Student Support Network has done in the first month this year. As a League, we support the ongoing work of this organization. Their annual fundraiser event is **Oct 22nd, 7p.m.** at Goucher College. Come enjoy an evening with fabulous food, drink, auctions, raffles and friends.

Time is running out, so get your tickets now: www.StudentSupportNetwork.org.

CIVIC EDUCATION FACT SHEET

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Origin and Overview of the Study

The 2017 LWVMD Convention adopted Civic Education as a two-year study. The Convention minutes note that “Civic Education is and always has been a priority. The League needs *to discover just what is being done presently and how we can assist in improving communication about Civic Education.*” Because civic education and civic engagement are a part of the League’s core mission, this was an informational study, not a study to develop a consensus position. Study Group members selected 13 of Maryland’s 24 school systems (Baltimore City and the counties of Caroline, Carroll, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George’s, St Mary’s, Talbot and Washington). These 13 Local School Systems (LSSs) represent 67% of both high school and total enrollment in Maryland Public Schools. However, it should be noted that detailed information was not received from all 13 school systems, and these findings should not be generalized to the entire state.

We accumulated information in three areas: (a) the curriculum for Civic Education at the state and district levels (Sections II-VI below); (b) the ways in which the curriculum is actually taught in schools (Section VII); and (c) how students practice and demonstrate their civic engagement knowledge and skills learning (Sections VIII and IX). Our approach involved online research, supplemented by interviews with state and school-system Social Studies curriculum experts, teachers, students and Student Service-Learning (SSL) coordinators. While we encountered a few challenges such as navigating disparate websites and securing interviews in busy school systems, we were still able to develop a snapshot of the status of civic education in a sample of Maryland’s schools.

2. Findings on “what is being done presently?”

- a) Maryland’s Social Studies curriculum specialists have developed what appears to be a strong American Government (Am Govt) framework that complies with state education laws and is informed by the standards, frameworks, models and best practices recommended by leading educational organizations. The recently revised framework lays out a path to gaining: (i) knowledge of Am Govt structures and policy processes; (ii) the ability to critique diverse sources and communicate balanced positions supported by evidence, and (iii) knowledge about using various tools to influence policy.-(Sections II through IV)
- b) LSSs’ Social Studies coordinators appear to be conscientiously adopting the new Am Govt framework or adapting local curricula. We found examples of professional development and teaching resources used by teachers in developing their students’ discipline-specific skills and processes. The Maryland public school teachers whom we interviewed report using a variety of teaching approaches and tools, including a plethora of online sources. (Sections V through VII)
- c) Seventy-five SSL hours are required for graduation. Many schools and students judiciously use this requirement to achieve the intended civic education purpose. However, there may be ways to enhance the meaningfulness of the SSL requirement instead of treating it as a “checkoff” to be dispensed with expeditiously. Reduced resources to support SSL may be a contributing factor (Section VIII).
- d) Student learning is notoriously difficult to measure and even more challenging to attribute to causal factors. Academic assessments are one measure of the civics content and skills that students have learned. The new Am Govt Assessment was field-tested in May 2019 and, for the first time, tests discipline-specific literacy skills (in addition to course content). Results were not available at the time of this study. (Section IX)
- e) In Maryland (and in only nine other states), earning a full credit (two semesters) in U.S. government is a high school graduation requirement. The Study Group found that Maryland’s progressive regulatory infrastructure provides for standardized state assessments of students’ learning in specific subjects, including Algebra 1, English 10, Science and Am Govt. Of all these high school subject assessments, the pass rate in Am Govt has been the lowest, especially for special-track students (See Section IX page 7).
- f) Although civic education before high school was outside the scope of our study, we note disturbing trends like the marginalization of Social Studies in the elementary grades across the country. (Section X)

3. Suggestions for “how we can assist in improving communication about Civic Education”

(See Section XI)

II. WHAT IS THE CIVIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM AT THE STATE LEVEL?

Although civic engagement content is present in Maryland public school curricula, there is no required civics curriculum until 8th grade (one year of U.S. History) and high school (one year of Am Govt). The educators we interviewed indicated that civic/political engagement content and skills are taught primarily in Social Studies and secondarily in Science. We also encountered civic engagement activities incorporated in English courses in two counties (Kent and Montgomery). Our Study Group decided to focus this study on reviewing Maryland's high school Am Govt course.

III. WHAT IS MARYLAND'S HIGH SCHOOL AM GOVT CURRICULUM?

1. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Coordinator of Social Studies informed us that the state does not mandate a specific curriculum, but instead provides guidance and standards that (LSSs) can use to develop their own curricula.

2. A new framework for high school Am Govt was required to be implemented by 2018-19 for all school systems.

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SocialStudies/AmericanGovernmentFramework.pdf>

This framework revision was developed by MSDE largely in response to the 2017 amendment to the 2012 Md. Ed. Art §7-203, Education Accountability Program. The original 2012 statute had re-established the High School Assessment (HSA) in Am Govt as a graduation requirement and also established a middle school assessment in Social Studies. The 2017 amendment requires that the high school Am Govt assessment must "consist, to the greatest extent possible, of criterion-referenced, performance-based tasks that require students to utilize critical and historical thinking skills and analyze primary sources." (Source: <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/12042017/SocialStudies.pdf>)

3. The first statewide HSA of the newly revised Am Govt curriculum and framework was conducted in Spring 2019. HSA results were not available at the time of our study. Therefore the revised curriculum's impact on students' civic knowledge or skills is not yet assessed nor reported in this study. For the first time, Social Studies-specific literacy skills were tested, including "(a) evaluating sources and using evidence to identify credible, relevant information as well as (b) constructing arguments using credible evidence from multiple sources while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses." The new framework updates the older Common Core State Standards and complies with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for reading and writing in Social Studies. It also complies with the Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.04.08 Civics standard adopted in 2015 that "...students shall: (1) Understand the historical development and current status of the fundamental concepts and processes of government including authority, power, and influence, with particular emphasis on the democratic skills and attitudes necessary to become responsible citizens; and (2) Engage in political participation and contribute to the public process." (Source: <http://mdrules.elaws.us/comar/13a.04.08.01>)

FINDING: Maryland's state Social Studies specialists have developed a strong Am Govt Framework that complies with Maryland education laws and is informed by standards, frameworks, models and best practices recommended by leading organizations in the field.

IV. WHAT SECTION OF MARYLAND'S HIGH SCHOOL AM GOVT FRAMEWORK DID WE CHOOSE FOR OUR STUDY?

The Am Govt Framework has four units on the structure and function of government, and one unit each on Economic, Domestic and Foreign Policies respectively. Units do not have equal weight, and school systems are not required to adopt the unit structure rigidly. Within each unit are content topics. We narrowed our study to the "Domestic Policy" unit, and the content topic "Citizens and Public Policy" within it. This content topic's Essential Question is "How do individuals and groups influence government policy?" The Indicator and Objectives are: "The student will explain roles and analyze strategies

individuals or groups may use to initiate change in governmental policy and institutions” by “(a) analyzing how different interested parties influence the political process, policy and public opinion and (b) evaluating the tools of influence they use, including referendum, acts of civil disobedience, voting, boycotts, financial contributions, digital communication, and voting drives, etc.” This topic seemed to us to deal squarely with civic engagement.

V. HOW DO LSSs IMPLEMENT MARYLAND’S AM GOVT FRAMEWORK?

In Maryland, LSSs are permitted to choose the grade-level at which Am Govt is taught. They have the flexibility to develop their own curriculum guides, teaching tools and resources. Therefore the next step in this study was to review individual school systems’ curriculum guides to find out how they are implementing the new Am Govt Framework. For the 13 school districts covered in our study, we found the following:

1. Am Govt is taught in either grade 9 or grade 10 in all 13 surveyed LSSs. Washington County educators explained that by offering Am Govt in 9th grade, the timing allows teachers to leverage a stronger knowledge foundation built on a two-year curriculum sequence beginning with 8th grade American History and continuing with 9th grade US Studies. A teacher in Howard shared the opinion that ideally Am Govt would be taught in 12th grade when students are more mature and eligible to vote. However, the teacher observed that if the course were offered in 9th grade, students who fail the HSA on the first attempt would have more time to make it up in order to graduate.
2. Schools use various titles for this course besides Am Govt, including (a) “Local, State and National Government” (Baltimore City, Prince George’s and Washington); (b) “Government” (Carroll, Dorchester and Frederick); and (c) “National, State and Local Government” (Montgomery).
3. Frederick, Howard and Montgomery school systems post portions of their curriculum guides online for public viewing, and they were partially or fully updated to reflect the new Social Studies framework. The remaining ten district systems surveyed display their Am Govt course descriptions online, but not the actual curricula or guides. Study Group members had to make contact with individual Social Studies coordinators to obtain information about the curricula.

VI. HOW DO LOCAL SYSTEMS ALIGN THEIR CURRICULA WITH AM GOVT FRAMEWORK’S UNIT 6 “DOMESTIC POLICY” CONTENT TOPIC “CITIZENS AND PUBLIC POLICY”?

1. The structure of the Am Govt course varies quite widely among school systems in the number, sequencing and recommended duration of the units. These variations made it difficult to adhere strictly to our decision to focus on the State framework’s “Domestic Policy” unit and within it the “Citizens and Public Policy” content topic. For example, Caroline County combines Domestic and Foreign Policy into one unit but offers “Participation in Government” as a separate unit. Frederick has a unit on “Active Citizenship,” described as a “practical application of the knowledge students gained in Units 1-6.” Howard offers the “Role of the Citizen” within Unit 1 “Foundations of Government.” Prince George’s has “Civic Participation: How do citizens participate in and impact its political process?” and Washington offers “Civic and Political Institutions, B. Participation and Political Deliberation.”
2. More than half the school systems studied use state resources for their curricula and are therefore fully aligned with the new Am Govt Framework. Kent County, Maryland’s smallest county with one high school, is using the MSDE’s Voluntary State Curriculum for its Am Govt course. For Caroline, a Pacing Guide was written by the tenth grade Am Govt teacher. Talbot uses the state framework and is piecing revisions into the high school Am Govt courses. Dorchester also uses the state framework. Lesson plans reflect these content and skills standards. Examples include, from St Mary’s: “The process involves establishing context to the central question while building background knowledge, analyzing multiple sources using the inquiry model, and engaging collaborative discussion”; from Talbot: “It teaches active listening, civil discourse, knowledge of credible and non-credible support materials” and teachers can “slip in false information to see if it is recognized.”

3. Six other counties develop their own curricula: Frederick, Harford, Howard, Prince George's, Montgomery and Washington. Their curriculum guides articulate essential questions, content topics and subject-specific skills that are variations on the state's Am Govt "Domestic Policy" unit's "Citizens and Public Policy" content topic (see IV above). Examples include, from Montgomery: "students will utilize inquiry and literacy skills to develop a deep understanding of the foundation and structures of the US government, evaluate the importance of citizen participation in our democracy and analyze...."; and from Harford: "it requires students to study the concepts of responsibility, authority, justice, and participation as they relate to the form and function of government...". Washington is adapting its own curriculum guide, which will be finalized after considering the results of the 2019 field test.

FINDINGS: Many of the school systems use state resources to develop courses and their curricula are fully aligned with the state Am Govt Framework. Of the school systems that create their own curricula, all link to the Maryland Am Govt Framework. Where we were able to review local curriculum guides, we found them to be comprehensive, strong and thorough and reliably implementing the state's framework.

VII. HOW IS AM GOVT TAUGHT IN THE CLASSROOM?

Success in carrying out the objectives and details of the curriculum depends on how well it is taught in the classroom. Our approach was to interview teachers and students, and to sit in on classes. This turned out to be challenging because educators were understandably protective of their teachers' time, and were also bound by county processes.

How did teachers react to the changes in the Am Govt Framework?

1. Teachers generally thought that the Am Govt **content** had not changed very much: Some of the policies, court cases and topics had been replaced with more recent ones, like World Trade Organization and gerrymandering. One teacher liked the changes but added that on-level and ESOL-track students struggle with the changes. Another said there are not enough hours to cover all the content.

2. The significant change is the **new emphasis on the skills of critical reading, evidence-based analysis and argumentative writing**. Several teachers (Mid-Shore, Montgomery, Caroline) responded that these skills were already being taught. What is new is that these skills will now be tested in the Am Govt HSA required for graduation. Caroline provided several examples of Document Based Questions being used: "Is the American Jury System Still a Good Idea?", "Should Americans be Required to Vote?", etc.

3. Several school systems have added professional development to facilitate the changes in the Am Govt Framework, especially on the teaching of skills. Talbot has engaged a literacy coach to partner with Social Studies teachers, and Howard is providing guidance on how to teach students to identify bias, as well as how to handle controversial issues in the classroom.

4. We found that teaching approaches varied widely. According to an interviewee in Frederick, "There is a great difference in content and method of presentation based on the knowledge, skills and interest of the teachers." In Washington we were told, "Teacher preferences played a big role in how the course is actually taught. Some teachers use a lot of current events discussions, debates and other highly interactive teaching strategies. Others are more lecture driven." A Montgomery teacher gave an example of using structured deliberations for a policy position whereby students analyze the majority as well as the dissenting opinions of Supreme Court decisions. In Talbot we learned that "students are eager and motivated to take on civic needs, but high school civics must be more related to the students' real world."

5. We asked about teaching tools and resources used by teachers and students. Few LSSs use a textbook for the Am Govt course. Instead, most teachers use a variety of online resources and various media including Washington Post articles and C-Span news clips, as well as charts, graphs and videos. The most frequently mentioned online source was iCivics founded by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

<https://www.icivics.org/>

FINDINGS: Based on what we learned from the students and teachers we were able to interview, our Study Group was impressed with the variety of teaching tools and innovative approaches used by teachers. We would suggest finding a way for teachers to share their experiences, resources and materials, especially in the teaching of skills.

VIII. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SSL IN CIVIC EDUCATION?

1. Introduction:

In July 1992, Maryland became the first state to mandate service-learning participation as a high school graduation requirement. As stated in the Maryland Student Service-Learning Guidelines of 2005, revised 2019:

“Service-learning is a teaching method that combines meaningful service to the community with curriculum-based learning. Students improve their academic skills by applying what they learn in school to the real world; they then reflect on their experience to reinforce the link between their service and their learning,” and “Service-learning has a positive impact on students’ civic engagement, personal and social development and school-community partnership. (Source:

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Service-Learning/MDSLGuidelines.pdf>) However, we learned that funding for Maryland’s SSL program at the state level has been reduced sharply, from a staff of eight to one part-time coordinator, resulting in fewer SSL resources available to counties and schools.

2. State graduation requirement for SSL

The MSDE adopted the following regulation to enact the SSL requirement: “Students shall complete one of the following: (A) 75 hours of student service that includes preparation, action, and reflection components and that, at the discretion of the local school system, may begin during the middle grades; or (B) A locally-designed program in student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.” (Source: Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.03.02.05: Student Service)

The Maryland SSL Guidelines state, “At the end of every school year, LSSs submit data related to student engagement with service-learning to the MSDE. This data includes which grade levels and courses infuse service-learning experiences, the percentage of direct, indirect and advocacy projects completed in the LSS that year, and the total number of hours students engaged in service-learning experiences. As part of that report, LSSs also provide to the MSDE a recent example of an exemplary service-learning project completed by students in their system.”

3. Fulfillment of the State Requirement

There is no state requirement to integrate SSL hours into the academic curriculum, although “all Maryland school systems infuse service-learning into existing courses as all or part of their service-learning implementation plans.” (Source: Maryland SSL Guide) Some counties incorporate all required SSL hours into the curriculum (e.g., Kent). Most academic SSL hours are earned through Social Studies courses (Frederick, Montgomery, St Mary’s). Washington and Harford systems specifically described SSL tied to other disciplines, and in Carroll County’s Science project to develop a blight-resistant chestnut tree, students were so engaged that they exceeded their 75-hour requirement, ultimately graduating with 152 SSL hours. Caroline, Prince George’s, Talbot and Montgomery mandate a combination of independent and classroom SSL hours, and Dorchester and Howard mentioned SSL in community projects.

In discussions with SSL coordinators and students, a common opinion was that some students treat independent SSL projects as a “checkoff,” and try to perform them before reaching high school. In fact, a few school systems stipulate SSL requirements in earlier grades. There was also a perception that for independent projects, students commonly designated as SSL an activity they were planning to do anyway, e.g., camp counseling, instead of developing a structured project with full consideration of the components of planning, performance, reflection and reporting.

The Maryland Service-Learning Fact Sheet for 2017-2018 contains some interesting statistics:

- 21,657 or 65% of SSL projects were embedded in courses.
- SSL projects embedded in classes were distributed by discipline as follows: Social Studies 33%, Science 23%, Language Arts 14%, Career Tech 12%, Health 7%, Math 4%, Art 1% and PE 1%.
- SSL projects embedded in classes occurred predominantly (76%) in grades 6 through 10. Of these, in descending order of prevalence by grade were projects in 6th grade (20%), followed by 8th grade (16%) 10th grade (15%), 9th grade (13%), 7th grade (12%). Source:
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Service-Learning/SLFactSheet.pdf>

4. SSL projects tied to political engagement

Our Study Group members were particularly interested in examples of SSL projects in policy engagement and political participation. However, while the SSL hours earned towards graduation are carefully recorded, the distribution of these hours by type of SSL project is more difficult to uncover, especially the breakdown between community/social services and civic/political engagement.

One of the state SSL guidelines suggests that "service-learning activities whose purposes are to increase voter registration and participation and/or implement voter education activities on particular issues may be counted toward the service-learning graduation requirement." We found two examples of such SSL projects. Montgomery's Future Vote program trained 39,000 students between 2004 and 2019 to assist with registration and election activities. St Mary's Voting Turnout project involves students developing and disseminating information for the community to encourage voting.

In the 2019 Maryland General Assembly session, a House bill was proposed to require all Maryland LSSs to create a voter registration process in schools. A Montgomery high school SSL coordinator reported that three students testified in favor of the bill, which was a concrete experience of advocacy. Unfortunately, the bill died.

5. An Extra Curricular Activity (ECA) does not normally count toward the SSL requirement, unless it meets a specific community need. That said, it is recognized that many ECAs foster civic engagement, e.g., participating in Student Government Association, National Honor Society, Board of Education, Model UN, mock trials, debate team, political clubs and activism. One teacher noted a "scale problem" with ECAs in that "only a small percentage of students participate in these activities."

FINDINGS: A few study group members concluded that some school systems' academic curricula needed to be more strongly linked to SSL. One member stated that her county's Curriculum Guide is strong and thorough in addressing civic education but the "SSL component is weak and depends upon teacher commitment to foster [it]...." One obstacle may be inadequate funding for the SSL program at both the state and local levels. The state's SSL Specialist welcomed the LWV to develop and submit SSL projects. We discussed our special interest in developing civil discourse models.

IX. HOW IS STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSED?

After examining the State's curriculum and exploring the teaching of the local curricula our last goal was to determine what students are actually learning. Student learning is notoriously difficult to measure and even more challenging to attribute to causal factors.

1. State Assessment

The State of Maryland mandates assessments at various grades for different subjects. To graduate from high school, students must pass the Maryland HSA in English, Algebra, Science and Am Govt or complete alternative requirements. (Source:

<https://www.hcps.org/sepg/Docs/GraduationAssesmentReqBasedOnCohort2024-072018.pdf>)

The new Am Govt Framework adds two new types of questions to test the application of skills: Technology Enhanced Items using drag-and-drop approaches to assemble answers, and Evidence Based Argument Set (EBAS) designed to assess knowledge acquisition and application of critical-thinking skills and logic.

We compared the new practice exam with the 2013 actual assessment and concluded that the content covered similar ground. The questions themselves are still primarily multiple choice, but there are several Brief Constructed Responses where the student is instructed to examine an assertion, take a position and make a case for it in writing. Also new are EBAS, where information on a topic is presented from four sources and multiple-choice questions are used to assess critical thinking skills in evaluating information from these sources. Then the student must state a claim, cite evidence from the sources and use content knowledge to write an evidence-based argument.

FINDINGS: The State of Maryland is one of only ten states that require students to earn a full credit (one-year course) in government as a graduation requirement. “While many gains have been made, there is still room for growth. The High School Assessment in American Government has the lowest pass rate of all the required high school assessments. Pass rates for students with limited English proficiency, students receiving special education services and those whose families qualify for free and reduced lunch continue to lag behind the pass rates for the general population.” (Source: *Final Report from Maryland’s Civic Architecture Symposium*, p.7)

Although it is clear that Maryland school districts are generally responding in varying degrees and with varying approaches to the new Am Govt Framework, it is too early to determine the actual impact of the newly revised Am Govt curriculum and educational approaches on student learning.

2. Local Assessments

In addition to the state Am Gov HSA, LSSs administer tests throughout the course. Kent gives unit assessments. Washington County students are given a variety of assessments throughout each unit of study, which can range from simple vocabulary quizzes to more complex essays. Montgomery does two assessments in the Common Writing Task, which develops thinking and literacy skills. In St Mary’s, “flexibility is key” and there are multiple methods of assessment, interactive as well as written, which do not have set dates but rather are given as needed.

FINDINGS: Teachers routinely give assessments throughout the course, and are adapting some testing to emphasize Social Studies-specific literacy skills. These intermediate tests solidify learning and provide practice for the final assessments.

3. Maryland Report Card <https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/>

The State of Maryland compiles an annual report card for the state, individual counties and schools. The major metrics are attendance and graduation rates. There are performance measures in the subject areas of English Language Arts, Math and Science, but not Social Studies, although the Academic Progress indicator does consider proficiency in Social Studies as one of many components of the formula. The website states, “In future years, the system will also include science and social studies achievement, and the results of a student/faculty survey.”

4. Standardized tests:

The June 2019 LWVMD convention keynote speaker, Dr. Brit Kirwan, Chair of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, mentioned he was surprised to find that, except for a few high-performing schools, Maryland students had lower scores on standardized tests than he had expected. His Commission’s 2019 report includes recommendations to improve all schools across the state and address this problem of unequal outcomes.

5. National assessments: The US Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics performs the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for representative samples of students in a few subjects each year. Grade 12 assessments for Civics and U.S. History are scheduled for 2022. The most recent Social Studies assessments were in 2018 for 8th grade U.S. History and Civics, but the results have not been published online as of Summer 2019.

X. WHAT IS THE STATE OF CIVIC EDUCATION BEFORE HIGH SCHOOL?

During the course of the study, several disconcerting trends were discovered about civic education before high school. Recently, the Social Studies Collaborative stated that Social Studies help prepare students for civic life and that the marginalization of Social Studies in the early grades is an issue of equity for all students. The Council of Chief State School Officers released a chart in 2018 on the marginalization of Social Studies. (Source: <https://ccsso.org/resource-library/marginalization-social-studies>) In the “Marginalization Chart” the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) states that 44% of school systems surveyed have reduced time for Social Studies since the enactment of No Child Left Behind. Research consistently demonstrates that Social Studies receives the least amount of instructional time in the elementary grades out of all core content areas.

FINDING: Although civic education before high school was outside the scope of our study, the Study Group considered these trends significant enough to be included in this report, for possible action by LWV.

XI. HOW CAN LWV ASSIST IN IMPROVING COMMUNICATION ABOUT CIVIC EDUCATION?

Other state Leagues have developed civics courses on their websites: Connecticut: Civics 101; Texas: Be a Texas Voter, and Delaware's YouTube “We're the WE in 'We the People.’” In our Study, the Mid-Shore, Montgomery and Harford Leagues made more than two dozen suggestions, e.g.,

- a) suggest or write a SSL project leading to civic engagement
- b) create a concentrated media campaign highlighting student involvement
- c) ask students for their ideas – perhaps a state-wide survey
- d) invite students to attend LWV meetings
- e) collaborate with school-based organizations (e.g., Identity, Liberty's Promise, Student Government Association)
- f) design a discussion project promoting civility and present it to a school or teacher for classroom use

At the LWVMD annual convention June 2019, we heard about existing examples of LWV involvement:

- a) Anne Arundel Leaguers serve as judges in the We the People competition
- b) Frederick County designated a day as LWV Day, and has a student member on the Board of Education
- c) Calvert's LWV participates in voter registration in schools, partners with NAACP and encourages students to register to vote or participate in actions
- d) Washington County sent two teachers to a Harvard three-day seminar on Civic Education

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- A. Does the information in this Fact Sheet agree with what you know about civic education in your school system?
- B. How would you define civic education? What is your opinion of civic education in Maryland public schools, and do you have any suggestions for areas of improvement at the state or local levels?
- C. Is there a role for the LWV to promote civic awareness and increase voter participation, civic action and civil discourse among younger citizens?
- D. How can the LWV “assist in improving communication about Civic Education”?
- E. Which ONE (or more) of the actions discussed today would your local league commit to acting on?

Final list of members and counties covered as of June 3, 2019

Billie Roberts Spann/Baltimore City; Melanie Cox/ Frederick County; Sandra Tracy*/Harford County; Susan Fingerman* and Lucie Geinzer/Howard and Carroll Counties; Linda Reed/Kent County; Lorraine Claggett*/Mid-Shore League; Diane Hibino* and Yoke San Reynolds*/Montgomery County and co-chairs; Maxine Lewack/St. Mary's County; Evvie Williams/Washington County*

* Members of Sub-Group for developing the Fact Sheet and Discussion Questions

Note: Prince George's school system was researched by Dorothy Ginter before she resigned early in April 2019

LWV BALTIMORE COUNTY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2019-2020

Co-Presidents: Theresa Lawler, Camille Wheeler

1st Vice President: Barbara Hopkins

2nd Vice President: Jennifer Haire

Secretary: Betsy Sexton

Treasurer: Neilson Andrews

Elected Directors:

Barbara Crain, Leslie Grant, Camille Marx,

Ralph Rigger, Caroline Seamon,

Elizabeth Sexton, Eileen Robier, Judith Schagrin

Newsletter: Sharalyn Luciani

Office Manager: Wilma Rosenberger



Not a member yet? Join today!

- Call the office: 410.377.8046
- Visit: www.BaltimoreCounty.org

League of Women Voters of Baltimore County
6600 York Road, Suite 211
Baltimore, MD 21212
Return service requested.



LEAGUE OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Office Manager, Wilma Rosenberger

410.377.8046

lwvbaltimore@comcast.net

www.LWVBaltimoreCounty.org

