



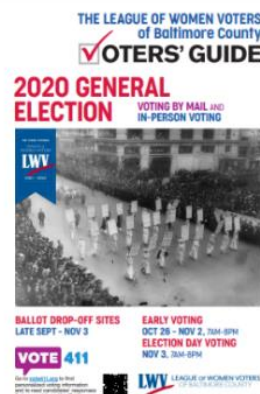
# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of Baltimore County The Voter

Volume 2020-21 Issue 2

October 2020

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## CALENDAR

All events are posted and updated at <http://lwvbaltimorecounty.org/calendar>

### October:

Oct. 13 – final day to register to vote

Oct 15, 2020 7 p.m. (Central) Fighting Against Fake News -The Case for News Literacy (p.3)

Oct 16, 2020 Noon (Eastern) Securing the Vote (p. 3)

Oct. 20 – last day to request a mail-in ballot

Oct. 26 – Nov. 2, early in-person voting

Wednesday, Oct. 28

12:30 p.m. – Speaker Dr. Mileah Kromer, “Polling and the 2020 Election,” LWV Baltimore City/County online series

7:30 p.m. – Book Club: *Begin Again: James Baldwin’s America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* by Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.



### November: VOTE on or before November 3!

Tuesday, Nov. 3 – in-person return mail-in ballots through the Post Office, or place it in a secure ballot drop box, or deliver it by hand to a Voting Center

Thursday, Nov. 5, 10:00 a.m. – Board meeting

Monday, Nov. 9, noon – *The Voter* deadline

Tuesday, Nov. 10, 7:00 p.m. – Zoom presentation, Dr. Martha S. Jones, discusses *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Fought for Rights for All*

Wednesday, Nov. 18, 7:30 p.m. – *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins

TBA: Vote by Mail (VBM) consensus meetings

### December:

Dec. 14 – Consensus deadline



**LWV Baltimore County:**

**Empowering residents through voter registration, education, and advocacy.**

## CO-PRESIDENTS LETTER

*Dear League Members,*

One goal of our strategic plan is to promote diversity within LWV Baltimore County membership and in the content of our events. There are rich rewards to be gained when organizations open to and engage people of many backgrounds. Historically, LWV has struggled to be inclusive, though racism and prejudice, as well as social norms, have interfered with the achievement of that ideal. Often leagues supported issues of importance to minority communities but did not include them in their membership.



In this year of the hundredth anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, we look back at the history of the League of Women Voters to help us understand the present. There were two competitive organizations that worked for the right of women to vote, the National American Suffrage Association (NASWA) and the National Woman Suffrage Association, being the more militant of the two. Fearing the loss of southern state support, a characteristic of the fight for women's suffrage was the unwillingness of either group to include African Americans, either as full partners in the suffrage effort, and subsequently as full members of the League, which was created from the NAWSA. The newly formed League of Women Voters historically deferred to the states when it came to the subject of admitting African Americans to full membership. Even so, the League was seen by many prominent Black women as a vehicle to support their right to vote and an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Unfortunately, the National League was not welcoming and relegated African Americans to separate segregated units — if they were allowed to participate at all.

Deeply divided by race, class, religion, ethnicity, and region, women do not always identify with one another, and as a result, women's collective identity—their sense of solidarity as women—has waxed and waned. . . People who join civic associations consider the act either in their personal interest, however defined, or in line with the values they hold.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, until 1965 the Leagues presented a patchwork of integrated units, units segregated by race, and units loosely associated with major minority organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. Though ostensibly granted the right to vote, Black women were denied that right in many states until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Minorities to this day are the target of voter suppression efforts.

Though attitudes have changed, the Baltimore County League struggles with becoming more diverse. As noted, our strategic plan includes the goal of increasing representation of Black and brown women. We also need the diversity of men, youth, people who speak different languages, people of different faiths, and people with different life experiences. Our goal is not just to bring in diversity, but also to practice inclusion. Verna Meyers famously said, "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance," and the LWVBCo wants to dance.

*"We, as an organization, acknowledge our own difficult history with racism while we embrace our future, where DEI\* will become part of our DNA."*

*League of Women Voters of the US  
Dr. Deborah Turner, President*



*\* Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)*

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson-Jenkins, C. (2020). *The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters* (p. 55). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC.

Whereas in the past, minorities needed the League, now we need them. How do we overcome history to achieve this goal? It is up to each of us to consider how we may contribute, perhaps by encouraging friends and colleagues to join, reaching out to organizations with which to partner, or examining our attitudes regarding the issues of race and class.

The events we are presenting in association with the Baltimore City League are a first step. Our presenters include men and women, Blacks, whites, and people of color. Our November presentation, *How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*, will be held on Tuesday, November 10 at 7:00 p.m. Professor Martha S. Jones, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor and Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University, will lead us as we look at how Black women have shaped our democracy.

As we look to the future, we welcome your ideas and suggestions. Please join us as we move our League forward.

*Sincerely,*

Co-Presidents Camille Wheeler Tana Stevenson

*Camille B. Wheeler Tana RH Stevenson*

## NEW MEMBERS

### LWV BALTIMORE COUNTY WELCOMES YOU!

Elaine Breslaw  
 Tamara Crail-Walters  
 Sharon Davlin  
 Trina Lion  
 Carrie Montague  
 Kathleen Skelton



## LWVUS/LWVMD

This year the League of Women Voters joins with the *National Institute for Civil Discourse* to share information and actions on our primary issues. The following events are open and often recorded for future listening. The focus is fair elections and confronting misinformation, two truths LWV continues to seek.

**Oct 15, 2020** 7 p.m. (Central)

**Fighting Against Fake News -The Case for News Literacy.** The League of Women Voters of Wheaton (IL) and The Robert McCormick House at Cantigny Park invite you to a virtual presentation by Peter Adams, Vice President of the News Literacy Project, fighting against fake news and developing the skills to recognize and evaluate information in order to become news literate. This event is part of their Civic Awareness Series. [Register Here.](#)

**Oct 16, 2020** Noon (Eastern)

**Securing the Vote.** Fourth in the series of Johns Hopkins SNF Agora Institute Conversations: **Election 2020.** (A six-week series of webcast conversations that will consider the specific current threats to American democracy and the path forward.) [Information/access here.](#)

## Preparing for Post-Election

With Malice Toward None. The days following the 2020 presidential election may become the most divisive period in modern U.S. history—no matter who wins. Both sides will worry about how people on the other side will treat them. In other words, the days after the election could begin a dark time of polarization in the land—unless we act together to make it otherwise. This is the opportunity presented in the *Malice Toward None* initiative. Sponsored by Braver Angels (formerly Better Angels), here is the [link to learn more](#).

Additionally, LWV encourages local league boards to communicate with communities about vote by mail security. They offer the following framework for board use in social media and letters to the editor, however the details within are relevant to members as we talk with friends and neighbors about vote by mail. The following is an example of how you can talk about vote by mail security.

### **Election Season – Using our strength. Reassuring our communities about vote by mail security.**

The Board of the League of Women Voters of --- stands in support of our state/county election officials and our USPS in their tireless efforts to ensure that mail ballots are delivered and received in a timely manner in preparation for the November election. We are aware of the President's remarks seeking to undercut confidence about mail-in ballots. [Studies](#) by the nonpartisan Brennan Center show decades of safe, secure, and accurate vote by mail. \*As League members, we have been on the front lines of elections for 100 years – registering voters, providing nonpartisan information for voters on state propositions, moderating candidate forums and more. We've also volunteered our time as poll workers, election observers, and election equipment monitors (called accuracy and logic testing) which detects any possible impropriety that may occur. We appreciate the work of these dedicated professionals whose sole mission is to ensure a free and fair election for all qualified voters.

\*Alternate language: As League members, we can reassure you. Voting by mail is not a new phenomenon. It's been used since the Civil War. For instance, in the last general election in November 2016, there were 1,652,875 registered voters in San Diego County. The turnout for the 2016 election was 1,346,513 voters, and 856,937 of them were vote by mail ballots. As you can see, we've been doing this for a long time and in high numbers. Our election officials are seasoned, efficient, knowledgeable, and dedicated. Do not be misled. You can track your ballot after it leaves your hands. We recommend that you vote early to ensure you meet ballot deadlines.





## COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

### ADVOCACY

#### CONSIDERING QUESTION A ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT

*Betsy Sexton*

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, our League held a virtual meeting about **Ballot Question A, which would amend the County Charter to establish a public financing fund system enabling local candidates to run for office without reliance on large or corporate donors.** Rishi Shah, Campaign Associate for Baltimore County Fair Elections and Maryland PIRG, hosted our meeting and led the discussion. We were pleased to have several new members join the meeting!



#### **Question A County Charter**

##### **Citizens' Election Fund System**

Section 1013 is added to the Baltimore County Charter to: establish a Citizens' Election Fund System for candidates for County Council and County Executive, beginning with the General Election to be held in 2026; provide that candidates may choose whether to participate in the system; establish a Citizens' Election Fund Commission; require the Commission to determine the funding of the system, provide for the funding of the system, require the creation of a sub fund to receive voluntary contributions by citizens; provide for the order of disbursements from the system; and authorize the County Executive to not fund the system if the County Executive determines that the County's fiscal condition makes it imprudent to do so. (Bill 3-19)

##### **o For the Proposed Charter Amendment**

##### **o Against the Proposed Charter Amendment**

If passed, this system would go into effect for the 2026 election cycle. The County Executive and the County Council would appoint the Election Fund Commission jointly. Candidates who opt in would agree to accept *only* small contributions from individuals—up to an amount set by the Election Fund Commission. (In Montgomery County, donors to a participating candidate may give from \$5–\$150 per election cycle, and the smallest donations receive the largest match.) Participating candidates would forego large gifts and corporate contributions. The matching fund from the County is expected to be about \$4.3 million per four-year election cycle. If the measure passes, Baltimore County would join Baltimore City and Howard, Prince George's, and Montgomery Counties.

**Our League supports this ballot measure.** It fits with the LWVUS position on money in politics (campaign financing) that supports “public financing of elections, either voluntary or mandatory, in which candidates must abide by reasonable spending limits.” We believe it would enable candidates to compete more equitably and promote citizen participation in the electoral process. Candidates would have to receive a set number of donations from County residents to qualify, and smaller donations would receive higher matching amounts. **We recognize that some people have concerns about small donor public campaign financing.** Some believe that taxpayer funds are better spent on education, infrastructure projects and other priorities that benefit all residents. Independent expenditures by SuperPACs for ads for and against candidates *and* endorsements by unions and other groups would still be in play.

LWV Montgomery County has published a study assessing their public financing option, which was used for the first time in 2018. In the 2018 election there, 23 of 68 candidates for local offices received public funds, with an average contribution of \$86 versus \$1,145 for candidates who did not receive public funds. The full study can be accessed currently on our website under [Studies](#).

## POVERTY IN BALTIMORE COUNTY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR BASIC NECESSITIES

Laurie Taylor-Mitchell, President, Student Support Network



We reported in the LWV September newsletter that 30% Baltimore County's high school students are now suffering from food insecurity—the anxiety and stress of not having continuous access to nutritious food.

Food insecurity is accompanied by many other forms of insecurity generated by poverty.

The Student Support Network has become acutely aware of “period poverty,” i.e. girls and women who cannot afford period products, which seriously affects leaving their residences for work, getting food, recreation, and, when schools re-open, even going to school.

Nationally, one in four women have struggled to purchase period products this past year, and one in four teens report not going to school because they cannot afford period products. Students also use period products for excessive periods of time when they cannot afford them, putting them at risk of health problems <https://www.parents.com/news/survey-menstrual-hygiene-products-period-poverty>

In Maryland, 37% of all girls in grades 7-12 attend Title I eligible schools, i.e. schools with high rates of poverty [https://cdn.b12.io/client\\_media/HJ1wIVtI/e5c8dfb4-95f9-11ea-a54f-0242ac110003-Maryland APS Period Poverty Fact Sheet 052020.pdf](https://cdn.b12.io/client_media/HJ1wIVtI/e5c8dfb4-95f9-11ea-a54f-0242ac110003-Maryland_APS_Period_Poverty_Fact_Sheet_052020.pdf)

Fortunately, Maryland does not tax period products. A bill requiring period products to be available without charge in public schools (HB208) did not pass during the shortened 2020 legislative session and hopefully will be re-introduced next year.

**Diapers:** The inability to pay for diapers and care for a baby or toddler in this most basic way is an acute source of stress for families. A lack of diapers limits child care options and can also put babies at increased risk of health problems and child abuse.

Nationally, 1 in 3 families suffer from diaper need, as identified by the National Diaper Bank Network. In Maryland, nearly 1 in 5 babies and toddlers live in poverty. [https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018\\_State\\_Diaper\\_Facts\\_11\\_2018\\_Maryland.pdf](https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018_State_Diaper_Facts_11_2018_Maryland.pdf)

Food assistance programs do not pay for period products, diapers, or other basic necessities such as toilet paper, laundry detergent, and soap. An average monthly supply of diapers costs \$70-80 (<https://nationaldiaperbanknetwork.org/diaper-need/>).

Unlike Baltimore City (ShareBaby), Baltimore County does not have a diaper bank distributing diapers to non-profits and partners serving families in poverty.

The Maryland Diaper Bank only distributes diapers in Charles County, Southern Prince George's County and St. Mary's County.

Recognizing these other basic needs in addition to food, the Student Support Network recently distributed its 10,000<sup>th</sup> pack of period products and distributes about 10,000 diapers a week to families. We often run out even with this number.

### Why are so many families in Baltimore County struggling to make ends meet?



- **A worker in Baltimore County needs to make \$25.81 per hour** to afford the fair market rent and utilities of a two-bedroom apartment without spending more than 30% of their income (National Low Income Housing Coalition; cited in Maryland Alliance for the Poor [http://mapadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles\\_2020-FINAL.pdf](http://mapadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles_2020-FINAL.pdf))
- **Nearly half of the jobs in Maryland pay less than \$20 an hour** (United Ways of Maryland ALICE report, updated 2020, page 1).
- **The current minimum wage in Maryland is \$10.10.**
- **In 2018, before the pandemic, 40% of all households in Baltimore County were struggling to make ends meet** (ALICE report, page 4).

For more information about the Network and our current activities and advocacy, please visit <https://www.studentsupportnetwork.org/> and click on “Become a Friend TODAY”.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### PROGRESS, PROGRESS, PROGRESS!

Today *The Voter*, tomorrow the *Handbook and Directory*! Yes, the *Handbook* is almost complete with the latest information on our board, priorities, and committees. All renewed members will receive it within the next few weeks. As you review it, consider ways you can volunteer or strengthen our league and its presence in Baltimore County.

## EDUCATION

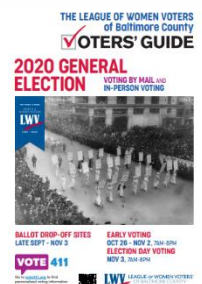
Camille Marx ([marx7633@lwvbaltimorecounty.org](mailto:marx7633@lwvbaltimorecounty.org))

Staying home allows us to think about important ideas. Now is the time to act. Consider the education ballot questions. The three questions are in the [Voters' Guide](#). Question 2 relates to approving gambling on local sports events with money dedicated to education. Items F and G involve funding for general education and community colleges. Read the [full information](#). Consider the pros and cons. Then vote.

**QUESTION 2** Commercial Gaming Expansion Referendum (Ch. 492 of the 2020 Legislative Session) Expansion of Commercial Gaming-Sports and Event Wagering. Do you approve the expansion of commercial gaming in the State of Maryland to authorize sports and events betting for the primary purpose of raising revenue for education? Vote FOR the referred law or AGAINST the referred law.

**QUESTION F** County Ordinance Community College Borrowing. AN ORDINANCE to authorize and empower Baltimore County, Maryland, to borrow \$17,500,000 for community college projects, including but not limited to the construction, improvement, maintenance, and modernization of buildings and other improvements for the community colleges, to be undertaken pursuant to Sections 705(a) and 718 of the Baltimore County Charter. (Bill 41-20)

**QUESTION G** County Ordinance School Borrowing. AN ORDINANCE to authorize and empower Baltimore County, Maryland, to borrow \$200,000,000 for public school projects, including but not limited to acquisition, construction, reconstruction, improvement, extension, repair, maintenance, conversion, and modernization of public school buildings and sites, to be undertaken pursuant to Sections 705(a) and 718 of the Baltimore County Charter. (Bill 42-20)



## MEMBERSHIP

### TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR YOUR DUES RENEWAL

*Neilson Andrews*

Is that dues envelope sitting at the bottom of a pile on your desk waiting for your dues check? It's time to sit down and write that check or go to [lwvbaltimorecounty.org](http://lwvbaltimorecounty.org) and, in the right-hand corner, click "Join". It will take you right to the PayPal site for easy credit card payment. Don't wait even a minute because we are about to publish our *Handbook and Directory* and you want to receive your copy filled with important League and membership information. Our Handbook and Directory is only mailed to renewed members.

The November election is right around the corner. We are busy getting out the vote, and your dues are needed for the effort. We hope you saw our League's banner at the bottom of the October 4 issue of *The Baltimore Sun*. You should have also received your *Voters' Guide* in the mail in the last week. We partnered with the YMCA of Maryland to register voters and to inform them about how to obtain a mail-in ballot.

If you have any questions about your dues or you think you may have paid them, and you received another dues reminder in the mail, please don't hesitate to call or email Neilson Andrews (410-583-0155 or [nandrews115@lwvbaltimorecounty.org](mailto:nandrews115@lwvbaltimorecounty.org).)

Your dues enable us to fulfill our mission, empowering residents through voter registration, education, and advocacy.

## VOTERS' SERVICE

### VOTER SERVICES AND THE UPCOMING ELECTION

*Barbara Crain*

Our *Voters' Guides* for the November election have been printed and distributed. Copies were mailed on September 29 to all members as well as to new voters across Baltimore County, senior living communities, and Community Colleges of Baltimore County. We also delivered copies to the Baltimore County Public Library in Towson. These *Guides* were subsequently distributed to every branch library and are now available curbside throughout the County. The process for curbside delivery may vary from branch to branch, so we recommend calling ahead for details. Finally, electronic copies of the *Guide* are available on our website, <https://www.lwvbaltimorecounty.org/>. Many thanks to Caroline Seamon for all her help with this project, as well as to Sue and Joe Garonzik, who helped with editing.

Our League has also staffed voter registration/voter information events for our community, including sessions for the Affordable Housing Council (AHC Inc., two sites), the Hereford Farm Market, and six sites at various Y locations in Central Maryland. An event is also being planned for Mom's Organic Market in Timonium. Thanks to all the volunteers who made these activities possible.

**Make your voting plan and VOTE!**

[Vote 411.org](http://Vote411.org) is now available in Spanish!





## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

*Sharalyn Luciani*

Are you talented at word processing and written communication? Are you energetic about collecting facts and disseminating information?

*The Voter* needs a new editor to coordinate creation of our monthly newsletter. This role is a critical one. *The Voter* is our primary source of communication and member information. Articles are written by board members who also forward pertinent information, photos, and opportunities for our league. The editor is responsible for collecting and organizing information, updating the league calendar, and creating the final product. It is not necessary to know all aspects about the League, but it is helpful. With the support of the entire board, the job is a team effort. Everything such as a final reader, printer, and mailing is already in place. We just need someone to put it all together. You can even use the current template!

Please contact Sharalyn at [sharalynlu@lwvbaltimorecounty.org](mailto:sharalynlu@lwvbaltimorecounty.org) or [contact@lwvbaltimorecounty.org](mailto:contact@lwvbaltimorecounty.org) to discuss what is needed and how you can help. Many thanks.

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## PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS

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### BOOK CLUB

There is plenty of room to join book club since now all meetings are virtual. Please contact Betsy Sexton, [esexton2009@lwvbaltimorecounty.org](mailto:esexton2009@lwvbaltimorecounty.org) for the link and time.

Wednesday, October 28- *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* by Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.

Wednesday, November 18- *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins

Wednesday, December 16- *The Address* by Fiona Davis

Wednesday, January 27- *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson

### COUNTY/CITY PROGRAMMING

LWV Baltimore County and City have combined forces to create outstanding programming. Our audience has expanded beyond Maryland to include listeners from all over the County.

Our second online event, held Tuesday, September 29, was especially timely. Brett Schafer of the Alliance for Securing Democracy presented "Defending Democracy from Disinformation: How to Protect the Election from Information Manipulation". He emphasized that it's important to distinguish between disinformation, false or inaccurate information spread intentionally, and misinformation which is inaccurate without the intent to deceive. There are ways to recognize disinformation, but most importantly we must think critically. We do have much to fear from disinformation, but we also were encouraged to question what we read and hear. Brett Schafer recommended not repeating or calling attention to false information. Repetition helps to reinforce the falsehood.

You can view his entire presentation at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=338814704124379>.

Combatting disinformation and misinformation is everyone's job. The leaflet from [www.Pen.org](http://www.Pen.org) on pages 12-13 lists sensible ways do our part.

## NEW PROGRAMMING: REGISTRATION IS OPEN NOW!

Please invite everyone you know.



Include **12:30 p.m. October 28<sup>th</sup>** on your calendar, when Dr. Mileah Kromer, associate professor and director, Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, Goucher College, updates us on “Polling and the 2020 Election: From Lessons Learned to New Trends”. You may recognize her from her talk at our holiday luncheon when she explained the significance of various polls and how to interpret results. We are looking forward to her analysis of current trends.

Register now at <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcsdOyupjItHdMzjumwPkt2o6mibWRsQRvz>.



Our final program for 2020 is on **Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.** Our featured speaker, Professor Martha S. Jones, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor and Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University, presents *How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*.

Register now at [https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlkc-qvrTspHtHRJ54\\_MNobdsHCILhUZOGJ](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlkc-qvrTspHtHRJ54_MNobdsHCILhUZOGJ)

Full event information is in the flyers on pages 18–19. All events are listed on our Facebook page and website calendar.

## CONSENSUS

What is VBM? That’s what we will explore in the upcoming consensus meetings.

VBM, vote by mail, is the method for conducting elections in which voters automatically receive a ballot in the mail without having to request one first, and in-person voting options are available but limited.

LWV of Montgomery County began examining VBM in June 2019. It was later agreed that this should be a state study, even though it would take longer than the 2020 election. Should the league take a position on VBM, it would be for elections going forward.

VBM and absentee voting are opposites in a fundamental way. In VBM, most voters return their ballot by mail or other means and relatively few people vote in-person. In absentee voting relatively few people vote by mail and most vote in-person. Another difference is that mail-in or absentee ballots must be requested for the year in which an election is held.



In 2020, Maryland legislature changed the terminology and in Maryland absentee voting is now called mail-in voting. But to be clear on terminology, VBM is not mail-in or absentee voting.

As we study and discuss vote by mail, we will be looking at the actions before, during, and after an election. We will consider the advantages and disadvantages, ease of voting, safety and security, costs, and the tabulation of results.

The fact sheets and discussion points are included at the end of this newsletter, pages 14-17. It is an interesting idea that we are certain will bring an interesting discussion.

## OF INTEREST

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Locate your closest voting locations by clicking the map below.

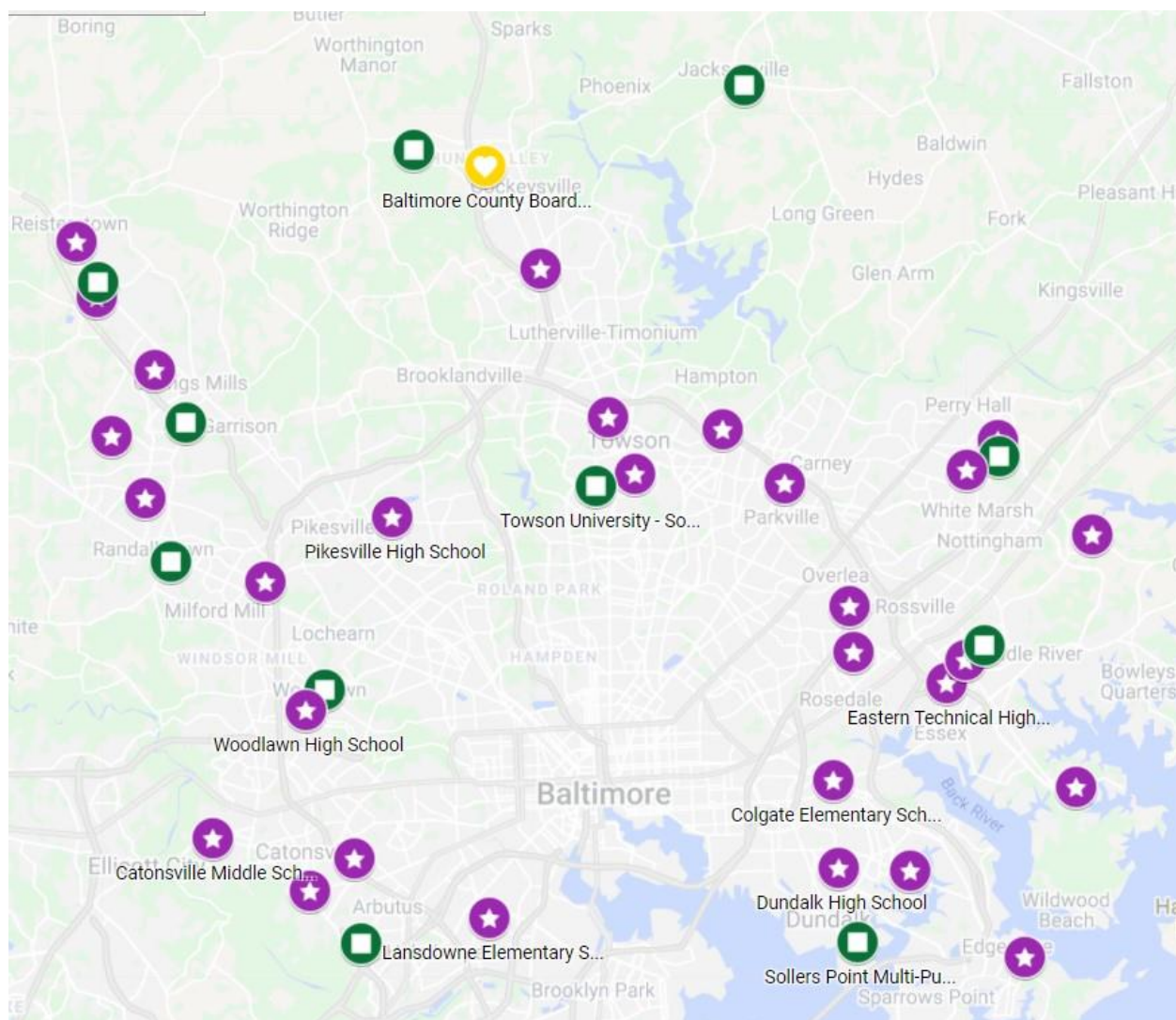
Can't access the link? Available on our homepage, [LWVBaltimoreCounty.org](http://LWVBaltimoreCounty.org).



### Where to Vote in Baltimore County



- Election Day (Nov 3)
- Early Voting and Election Day (Oct 26-Nov 3)
- Dropbox Only (Mon-Fri)





# HOW TO TALK TO FRIENDS & FAMILY WHO SHARE MISINFORMATION

## AN ELECTION TIP SHEET

[pen.org](https://pen.org).

You might know the feeling: You see your aunt, cousin, or friend share something on Facebook, but you doubt the information is true. And if that information is about a critical issue like COVID-19, an election, or a political candidate, you may feel compelled to respond. But what is the best way to do so? While some people create and spread *disinformation*—false information shared with the intent to deceive others—your friends and family may well spread *misinformation*, which is shared by people who may not know the information is false. They probably think the content is true, and they may feel they’re sharing something important. That can make it tough to know how to confront them. Here are a few suggestions.

### 1. Try to verify that the content is misleading or false *before* you engage.

Suspecting that content is misleading or false is different from having confirmed it. Before you attempt to correct someone who has shared what you believe to be misinformation, try to fact-check the story yourself. You can Google keywords from the headline and confirm the story is being reported by more than one credible outlet. In that case, it’s more likely to be true. Or you can see if the story has been verified on a fact-checking website, like Politifact, Snopes, or Factcheck.org.

### 2. To comment or not to comment?

Once you’ve confirmed that the content your friend or family member shared is actually misleading or false, your first reaction might be to comment publicly on their post. This can be helpful, especially if you can link to a widely credible source; [research suggests](#) that seeing a public correction can reduce the likelihood others are swayed by the misinformation. However, your engagement with the post may also give the false content greater visibility, since social media algorithms boost any content that elicits a response. If something was just posted, you might try sending a private note politely pointing out that it’s incorrect. The person behind the post might also be more receptive if they don’t feel they’ve been called out publicly. But if a post is getting a lot of likes and comments already, a public correction could make a big difference in reducing the harm it can do.

### 3. Consider the perspective of the person who shared the story.

It can be embarrassing, shameful, even anger-inducing when someone calls us out for sharing false stories. We’ve probably all accidentally shared “fake news” at some point. So when you message someone about their post, take care to use a supportive and positive tone. Otherwise, you risk alienating the person, making them less receptive to the information you’re trying to share. ([Learn more about the psychology](#) of why it can be so hard to correct people.) You might say something like, “I was curious about the thing you posted, so I did some Googling and here’s what I found. . .” Providing a personal story of a time you shared false information is also a great entry point to talking with others about misinformation. However you choose to engage, do so with **empathy**.



#### 4. Avoid escalation.

Sometimes, the conversation may not go well. Your friend or family member may get defensive, and you may feel the conversation is no longer constructive, or that the person is only becoming more resistant to hearing your message. If it seems like the conversation is moving in that direction, just remember that it can be hard for people to accept corrections, and it is tough to change attitudes—no matter how well-grounded your comments are. Offer them the tools to fact-check what they see, and take it upon yourself to proactively share factual information and resources (such as information from credible sources like the World Health Organization or your state or local Board of Elections) on your own feed. That way, you're helping to keep all your friends and family accurately informed.

#### 5. Be a resource for others.

It's important to correct misleading or false information, whether publicly or privately. But what can you do to help *proactively*? Give your friends and family resources on misinformation and easy tools to conduct their own fact-checks going forward. You can share PEN America's tip sheets, such as [our guide to verifying images and sources](#), or [our guide on COVID-19 misinformation](#). You can also share information about trusted fact-checking websites and encourage others to [attend a training](#) on these subjects.

Pen.org<sup>2</sup>

@penamerica

#WhatToExpect2020



Our League is hard at work. Phyllis Panopoulos and Tracy Miller set up a station at Towson University to answer election questions and register new voters.

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<sup>2</sup> PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect free expression in the United States and worldwide. We champion the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world. Our mission is to unite writers and their allies to celebrate creative expression and defend the liberties that make it possible.

## **CONSENSUS FAQ**

### **VOTE BY MAIL (VBM)**

#### **PART 1: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

##### **BACKGROUND**

##### **1) How many states already rely on VBM as the standard method of voting?**

Five states now rely on VBM statewide. Here are the states and the year VBM was implemented as the standard method of voting for all elections statewide: Oregon (2000), Washington (2011), Colorado (2014), Utah (started in 2013, fully implemented 2020), and Hawaii (2020).

##### **2) Does turmoil in the 2020 election suggest that VBM should not be considered by states?**

Unclear. In most states in 2020, the shift to using vote-by-mail was done rapidly without sufficient time to methodically plan its implementation. As a result, Boards of Elections were rushing their procedures and there may not have been as much voter education as was needed. The first state to implement VBM—Oregon—had been starting to use VBM in elections throughout the 1990s and a citizen's initiative overwhelmingly passed in 1998 (effective 2000) to adopt VBM for all elections statewide. When Maryland implemented VBM for the 2020 primary election, the Board of Elections had 6 weeks between the time the decision was made to use VBM and the start of mailing out the first ballots. Because of the pandemic, 2020 appears to be a special situation.

##### **3) Is there a difference between absentee voting and VBM?**

Yes. Voters must request and complete an application for an absentee ballot. In Maryland, although the state legislature has passed a law that requires absentee ballots or absentee voting to be identified as mail-in ballots or mail-in voting, the procedures for requesting a ballot have not changed. When a state offers absentee (mail-in) voting, most voters cast their ballots in-person. In states with a VBM system, all active registered voters automatically receive a ballot in the mail for each election. Most voters vote by mail. All five states that use VBM also have a limited number of in-person voting centers available for voters who need or want to vote in-person.

##### **4) How many voters are there in Maryland and how many vote by mail?**

According to data from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, In the 2016 presidential election, 2,807,326 people voted, which was 67% of the voting age population (72% of registered voters) and over 90% of voters went to a polling place on or before election day. In the 2020 primary election, conducted using VBM, 97% of almost 1.5 million voters returned their ballot by mail or to a drop box.

##### **VOTING PROCEDURES IN VBM**

##### **5) What if I want to vote in-person? Will in-person voting be eliminated if VBM is implemented?**

All VBM states include some voting centers on election day and early voting for voters who need or want to vote in-person. Those might include people who need assistance completing a ballot, people who want to register on election day, or people who simply prefer to vote in-person. However, there are fewer voting centers available than would typically be found in a “traditional” election.

##### **6) Is mail delivery reliable?**

At the present time, mail delivery may be inconsistent in some areas. However, all states that use VBM offer multiple ways to return a ballot in addition to the US mail, such as drop boxes, taking a ballot to a local election office and in-person voting centers.

##### **7) Are drop boxes secure?**

Yes. They are under surveillance 24/7 with cameras and are emptied one or more times per day. All VBM states use drop boxes and the majority of voters in those states return their ballot to a drop box or a physical location (such as a local election office).

**8) Does VBM allow voters to “cure” or correct rejected ballots?**

It can include this. All VBM states have a system for promptly informing voters whose ballots have been rejected because of a signature problem and offer a means for voters to provide another signature so the ballot may be counted. The length of time allotted for the process varies from state to state.

**9) Can voters check to make sure that their ballot has been received and recorded?**

Yes, most states, including Maryland, provide a website where a ballot can be tracked. For example, voters can see if their ballot was sent or received. It is not “real time” information; it takes some time for the BOE to record the information in their database and for the information to appear online. Maryland voters can check the status of their ballot at <https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/VoterSearch>

**10) Can voters be assured that their privacy is protected?**

In some states, voters can put their ballot into a privacy sleeve (or envelope) before inserting it into the return envelope. When the ballot is opened for counting, the poll worker cannot view the voter’s signature while handling the ballot. The ballot is removed from the privacy sleeve (which has no identifying information) in order to be scanned.

**BENEFITS OF & CONCERNS ABOUT VBM****11) Does VBM save money or increase the costs of elections?**

During transitions from traditional voting to VBM, costs may increase. Extensive voter education campaigns help familiarize voters with the new system and may require multiple media, such as postcards, posting to social media, and radio or television advertising, to reach the maximum number of voters. Postage-paid return envelopes for ballots are another common VBM expense. Purchase and monitoring of secure drop boxes may also be an initial expense. However, over time, as happened in Colorado, costs may go down as many fewer poll workers are needed to be trained and paid, and fewer polling places need to be supported by staff, utilities, and in some cases rent.

**12) Does VBM increase turnout?**

Likely. Research shows that turnout generally increases around 3% on average (measured across multiple elections). A study that was done three years after implementation of VBM in Oregon found that 48% of voters who identified as disabled or unable to work reported voting more often after VBM. Voters do not have to take time off work, arrange for babysitters, or otherwise make accommodations to be able to vote during specific times when the polls are open. However, turnout can still vary by election. For example, turnout tends to be higher in presidential elections than mid-term elections and in general elections compared to primary elections. This variation remains even with VBM.

**13) Why is VBM preferable to traditional in-person voting?**

More voters in states with established VBM systems participate in elections and express enthusiasm for the system. To cast a ballot, voters do not have to take time off work, arrange for childcare, find transportation, or stand in line. Voters can take time to research the candidates and issues. It also ensures that voting can occur safely during pandemics or other crises.

**14) What are the concerns about VBM?**

VBM is a change in the way many voters are accustomed to casting their ballot, so voter education and outreach is required and can be costly. It can be particularly challenging for voters who may not have a traditional mailing address, such as homeless or for people who move frequently, such as younger people. Election results typically take longer to issue and certify. Even when steps are taken to prevent fraud, some voters remain concerned about its potential.

## LWVMD POSITIONS

### 15) Maryland already used VBM in the 2020 presidential primary. So why is LWVMD considering a position now?

VBM was used once in the Rockville, Maryland mayoral election in November 2019. It was also used twice in Maryland during 2020. It was used in the 2020 presidential election because Gov. Hogan issued a special proclamation due to the pandemic. It was also used to fill Rep. Elijah Cummings seat in District 7. The 2020 general election was not conducted using VBM. Rather, for that election, all registered voters were mailed an application to request an absentee/mail-in ballot. Currently, Maryland law permits VBM for special elections, such as filling a vacancy for a member of Congress. For VBM to be used as the standard way of conducting elections statewide, current laws must be changed.

### 16) If consensus is reached, will LWVMD have a position in time for the 2020 presidential election?

No. LWVMD members will be considering the issue at unit/discussion group meetings during October & November. In December, the results from those meetings will be reviewed. If a consensus is reached, LWVMD could have a position should the state legislature bring up the issue in future sessions.

## Part 2: Security Procedures

### EXAMPLES OF SECURITY PROCEDURES USED BY STATES FOR MAILED IN BALLOTS

States using vote by mail<sup>3</sup> or absentee (mail-in) voting follow these security procedures in varying degrees. Often the procedures take years to develop, legislate and fund. The purpose of this document is to identify various procedures that are used. No endorsement is implied or intended.

#### Procedures Typically Used Before An Election

- **Detailed Voter Roll Maintenance:** systems that allow states to keep their voter information up to date. Federal laws that regulate and support maintenance are National Voter Registration Act (1993) and Help America Vote Act (2002).
  - State or local Board of Election (BOE) policies that make registration updates convenient for voters.
  - Database reports obtained from Department of Motor Vehicle (DAVID), Department of Revenue, Social Security Administration Death Index, United States Postal Service National Change of Address (NCOA), Systematic Alien Verification (SAVE), Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC-20 States currently participating), reporting agent that handles criminal data for felon voting status.
  - Access to recuses from Jury duty notices indicating the voter no longer lives in that jurisdiction or has died.
  - Confirmation mailings from BOE to a voter stating that they have “reason to believe” the voter has moved. Evaluation of undeliverable voting information or ballots.
- **Voter Education:** campaigns to educate voters about the rules and procedures in the voting process.

#### Procedures Typically Used During the Election

- **Verification of Returned Ballots**
  - Signature verification, also known as “signature matching,” in which the voter’s signature on the ballot is matched either by software and/or by trained bi-partisan reviewers to a signature(s) that has been previously submitted by the voter or culled from various documents. Voters may also be given an opportunity to correct any signature discrepancies. Thirty-one states have signature verification and 19 require that the voter be notified to cure (fix) any voter discrepancy.
  - Signature witness in which a witness signature is required for the voter’s signature (used by 7 states). Three states require a notarized signature.

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<sup>3</sup> The method of conducting elections in which all qualified voters are automatically mailed a ballot without having to request one and in-person voting options are available but limited.



- Require and verify that the voter has signed the ballot (no signature verification or matching). Used by 7 states including Maryland.
- Unique barcode in which each voter is assigned a unique barcode that is scanned when the voted ballot is received at the BOE to ensure each person only votes once. Barcodes can also be used to support ballot tracking.
- **Secrecy Sleeve or Envelope:** after completing their ballot, the voter places it inside the secrecy sleeve (or envelope), which then goes inside the return envelope for mailing. It is intended to protect a voter's privacy by separating their signature (which identifies them) from their ballot.
- **Ballot Tracking:** a guardrail against double voting and counterfeit ballots. Voters can track their own ballot online through the United States Postal Service using Intelligent Mail Barcode (IMB) to when it is counted.
- **Secure Drop Boxes:** a secured location for voters to drop off mail ballots in sealed and signed envelopes. The drop boxes are designed to be tamper proof and may be supervised or unsupervised with security features (cameras).
- **Rules for Who Can Return a Voted Ballot:** some states require that only the voter return a marked ballot, 10 states allow a family member to return a ballot and 26 states allow the voter to designate someone else to return their ballot but 12 of them put a limit on the number of ballots a person can return. Thirteen have no laws on this issue.
- **Secure Ballot Storage:** a secure monitored space to store mailed in ballots received days before Election Day.

### **Procedures Typically Used at All Stages of an Election (Before, During & After)**

- **Cyber Security Efforts:** include having a partnership with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for physical and cyber security audits, conducting regular data backups and training of election officials and staff on cyber security.
- **Use of Paper Ballots:** provides a paper trail and prevents hacking.
- **Chain of Custody:** procedures to account for all steps in the process of moving and processing ballots.
  - Pre- and post-election audits.
  - Bipartisan teams that are used for all steps in the voting process, including picking up ballots, reviewing signatures, canvassing, etc.
  - Video surveillance of drop boxes, ballot storage and canvassing.
  - Public participation and oversight, such as election observers.
- **Social Media Monitoring:** targets disinformation and misinformation directed at voters about the elections and detects problems with the voting process on election day from signs of voter intimidation to poorly functioning polls.
- **Equipment Testing & Security:** includes the testing of tabulating equipment by an independent contractor with the public invited to observe and documentation of testing results; use of ballot scanners that are not connected to any network or internet; and secure locations to store all voting equipment.
- **Voter Fraud Penalties:** strict federal and state laws with criminal and civil penalties to deter individuals from committing voter fraud.

### **Web Resources**

MIT Technology Review, [www.technologyreview.com](http://www.technologyreview.com)  
 US Election Assistance Commission, [www.eac.gov](http://www.eac.gov)  
 Brookings Institute, [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu)  
 National Conference of State Legislators, [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)  
 Center for Democracy and Technology, [cdt.org](http://cdt.org)  
 League of Women Voters "5 Reasons to Have Confidence in Mail-In Voting, [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)  
 Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, [siepr.stanford.edu](http://siepr.stanford.edu)  
 Brennan Center, [www.brennancenter.org](http://www.brennancenter.org)  
 Office of the Secretary of State Washington, [www/sos.wa.gov](http://www/sos.wa.gov)  
 Colorado Secretary of State, [www.sos.state.co.us](http://www.sos.state.co.us)  
 Vote.Utah.Gov, [voteinfo.utah.gov](http://voteinfo.utah.gov)  
*Prepared by Rosemary Hess.*

The League of Women Voters of Baltimore City and County  
invite you to our online event.

## Polling and the 2020 Election

**Wednesday, October 28<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 p.m.**

Our featured speaker, Dr. Mileah Kromer, associate professor of political science and director, Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, Goucher College, will discuss:

*“Polling and the 2020 Election: From Lessons Learned to New Trends”*



As director of the Sarah T. Hughes Field Politics Center, Dr. Mileah Kromer oversees every aspect of the Goucher Poll, including survey instrument construction, sampling, data analysis, and the development of appropriate survey methodologies. In addition, she is responsible for interviewer training and lab supervision. Dr. Kromer also teaches courses on American politics and research methods. Her research interests include public opinion, survey research methodology, and American state politics.

Dr. Kromer's scholarly work has appeared in *Social Science Quarterly*, the *Social Science Journal*, the *Journal of Legislative Studies*, and the *Journal of Political Science Education*. She is a frequent commentator on Maryland politics and has been quoted in *The Washington Post*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Atlantic*, *NPR*, *The Boston Globe*, and *U.S. News and World Reports*.

### Registration is open now!

**Register in advance for this meeting:**

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcsdOyupjItHdMzjumwPkt2o6mibWRsQRvz>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with details  
for joining the event on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

*Please forward this email to your friends. This event is open to ALL.*

For further information please contact [events@LWVBaltimoreCounty.org](mailto:events@LWVBaltimoreCounty.org).

**Zoom with us again  
Tuesday, November 10 at 7:00 p.m.**



Professor Martha S. Jones, Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor and Professor of  
History, Johns Hopkins University

*“Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote,  
and Fought for Rights for All”*

The League of Women Voters of Baltimore City and County  
invite you to our online event.

## **Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All**

**Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.**

Our featured speaker will be Professor Martha S. Jones, Society of Black Alumni  
Presidential Professor and Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University.



Professor Martha S. Jones is a legal and cultural historian whose work examines how Black Americans have shaped U.S. democracy. Her recently published book, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All*, offers a new history of African American women's political lives. She is also the author of *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*, which won awards from the Organization of American Historians, the American Historical Association, and the American Society for Legal History. A frequent writer for broader audiences, her articles have appeared in *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic* and other publications. Professor Jones holds a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University and a J.D. from the CUNY School of Law.

**Registration is open now!**

**Register in advance for this meeting:**

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlkc-qvrTspHtHRJ54\\_MNobdsHCILhUZOGJ](https://zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tJlkc-qvrTspHtHRJ54_MNobdsHCILhUZOGJ)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with details  
for joining the event on November 10<sup>th</sup>.

*Please share this information with others. This event is open to ALL.*



## LWV BALTIMORE COUNTY

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Not a member yet? Join today!

- Call the office: 410.377.8046
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### LEAGUE OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday, Thursday: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Office Manager: Maggy Lindgren

410.377.8046

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[www.LWVBaltimoreCounty.org](http://www.LWVBaltimoreCounty.org)

