



Volume 2020-2021 Issue 6 February/March 2021

CALENDAR

February

Feb 17, 6pm	<u>America’s Broken Legal System</u> presentation, sponsored by the Brennan Center for Justice
Feb 18, 2pm	LWVBCO Policy Program Planning Board Vote
Feb 18, 1pm	<i>The Reunited States</i> , film and discussion, sponsored by LWV-Snohomish and Braver Angels
Feb 23, 7pm	New Member Meet and Greet Visit our calendar at http://lwvbaltimorecounty.org/ to join the Zoom call.
Feb 21, 9pm	Coded Bias: Are You Being Targeted? Film and discussion sponsored by LWV-Los Angeles
Feb 24, 7:30pm	Book Club - <i>Daughters of Yalta: The Churchills, Roosevelts, and Harrimans: A Story of Love and War</i> by Catherine Grace Katz

March

Mar 10, 1pm	<u>County/City Speaker Series: Crisis in Local Journalism</u> , with by Liz Bowie
Mar 24, 7:30pm	<i>Strangers in Their Own Land</i> , by Arlie Russell Hochschild
TBA	Consensus Meetings - <u>Getting an Initiative on the Ballot</u>

April

Apr 15, 1:15pm	<u>County/City Speaker Series: Environmental Policy and Challenges</u> with Tom Pelton
Apr 28, 7:30pm	<i>Bagman</i> , by Rachel Maddow and Michael Yarvitz
TBA	Consensus Meetings - <u>Getting an Initiative on the Ballot</u>

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LWV Baltimore County
Empowering residents
through voter registration,
education, and advocacy

CO-PRESIDENTS' LETTER



Camille Wheeler,
Co-President
LWVBCO

In his poem, “Mother to Son”, African-American poet Langston Hughes wrote, “Well, son, I’ll tell you: Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.” That was true when he published the poem in 1922 and, sadly, it continues to be true today for many African American women. Yet despite the myriad obstacles generations of black women have had to face, many have forged ahead, pushing through barriers and breaking glass ceilings in their pursuit of social, economic and political equity. As the League of Women Voters Baltimore County joins the nation in celebrating Black History Month, we want to recognize a few of the black female politicians who have “climbed stairs with tacks, no carpet, and boards torn up” but who kept on climbing nonetheless.



Tana Hamilton,
Co-President
LWVBCO

Vice President Kamala Harris has climbed those stairs, and as a result, she has an impressive list of firsts. Prior to becoming the nation’s first African American woman to be elected into the Executive Branch, VP Harris was serving as California’s first African American female senator, the 10th black person to serve as Senator since that body was formed in 1789. She also held the dual honor of 1st African American and 1st woman to serve as the California attorney general. VP Harris has blazed an impressive trail, “climbin’ on, and reachin’ landin’s”, never turning back. But her accomplishments were possible thanks to the help she had from powerful women of color who had climbed that splintered stair before her.

Carol Moseley Braun made history when she became the first female African-American US Senator in 1993. Senator Moseley Braun was the first woman to serve on the powerful Finance Committee and the second women to serve on the prestigious Senate Judiciary Committee. During her six years in office, Senator Moseley Braun addressed many issues affecting women and African Americans, and was an ardent champion of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

Shirley Anita Chisholm was another trailblazer, serving as the first black woman in the US Congress. Representative Chisholm was a member of the LWV-Brooklyn, NY, before being serving as a US Representative for the 12th Congressional district until 1983. During her tenure, Representative Chisholm was the first black woman, and second woman ever, to serve on the powerful Rules Committee. She was also a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Women’s Caucus.

Closer to home, Verda Freeman Welcome was the first black female elected as a Maryland State Senator in 1952 and the second black woman to hold such a title after Cora Mae Brown. During her twenty years in office, Senator Welcome worked to end discrimination in public housing, fought for equal pay for equal work, and strove to reform the state’s correctional facilities, among others. In 2020, Senator Welcome became the first black woman to have her portrait hung in the 370 year old MD State House.

Victorine Adams was a pioneer in Baltimore politics. The first black woman to serve on the Baltimore City Council from 1966-1983, her political career actually started in 1946 when she founded the Colored Women’s Democratic Campaign Committee, which encouraged Black women to vote and run for office. Among her many achievements, Ms. Adams worked with BG&E in 1979 to establish the Baltimore Fuel Fund to help low income families with their heating bills, a legacy that continues to this day not only in Baltimore, but across the nation.

These Black women, like the many who have come before them, knew that “sometimes goin’ in the dark where there ain’t been no light” was a way to shine a light for generations to come. Thanks to their courage and perseverance, we are making our way toward a future where women of color will serve in every political office available, from governor to Supreme Court Justice. They didn’t “set down on the steps” when they found the climb difficult, and for that reason they have made it easier for those that follow to keep climbing. They exemplify a core value of the League of Women Voters, the power of women to create a more perfect democracy. For it is only when every person has the right to participate equally in the structuring of our nation that we can achieve the democratic ideal of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Sincerely,

Camille Wheeler

Tana Hamilton

Co-Presidents

Written in collaboration with Board Director Carol Wynne.

LWVUS

For the People Act



Virginia Kase,
CEO LWVUS

Nov 2020 - The League of Women Voters is very excited at the prospect of the reintroduction and the final passage of the For the People Act because it aims to include elements that align with many of the League's long-held positions, like election modernization and redistricting reform. LWV is advocating for the prioritization of the following essential elements of the bill:

1. RESTORE THE VRA

Restoring the Voting Rights Act will strengthen our elections by cutting back the obstructive laws that have kept eligible voters from exercising their right at the ballot box. Since the Supreme Court's Shelby County decision rolled back key provisions of the Voting Rights Act in 2013, we have seen the process of voting become more challenging, especially for women and communities of color. In recent elections, voters have faced a variety of obstacles, from reduced polling places to long lines, to strict voter identification requirements, to the removal of registered voters from the rolls. The Voting Rights Act was created to ensure that every American has an equal right to vote. HR1 includes strong support for restoring the provisions to strengthen voting rights and protect all eligible Americans at the ballot box.

2. IMPLEMENT FAIR REDISTRICTING

It is time to end gerrymandering once and for all so that voters select their elected officials – not the other way around. Additionally, without passage of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act, this will be the first redistricting cycle conducted without the full protections of the VRA. Across the country, in legislatures, in court, and on the ballot, the League has fought against efforts by politicians of both major parties to draw unfair election maps to keep power in their own hands. Gerrymandering silences the voters and residents of disputed districts, who, instead of electing officials to represent their interests, are selected by the politicians working to serve themselves. HR1 should establish clear rules around state redistricting processes so that maps can be drawn fairly. These provisions, combined with the restoration of the Voting Rights Act, will ensure fair and equal representation for all people across the country.

3. EXPAND VOTER REGISTRATION

We must modernize the registration process through the expansion of automatic voter registration, online voter registration, and same day registration. Just this election we saw how these provisions led to increased voter turnout that benefited both parties. As election observers and partners in Election Protection, the League has seen first-hand the current problems with our election system that prevent participation of eligible voters in our elections: complicated registration and deadlines that vary by state and county, wrongfully purged voters, recounting processes and audits with an increased number of provisional ballots. HR1 should modernize our voter registration processes, which would go a long way in addressing these barriers.

4. CREATE A NEW PUBLIC FINANCING SYSTEM

We need to rebalance our system so that Big Money doesn't set Washington's agenda or decide who gets a seat at the table. Corruption occurs in Washington when wealthy donors and powerful interests use political money to buy influence. Without the creation of a new public financing system, there is no way to end Washington corruption. Passing small-donor, citizen-funded campaign programs -- a simple, proven solution that amplifies everyday voters' voice in our elections-- will ensure ordinary people can run for office without relying on Big Money to participate.

The common-sense reforms in the For the People Act, which are deeply popular and have passed in many states and localities, cover the necessary structural democracy reform, our nation needs to be able to fully address important substantive priorities for the American people, such as expanding affordable healthcare and stopping the spread of COVID-19, protecting the environment, and creating millions of good-paying jobs. This legislation, combined with the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act (H.R.4) and legislation granting statehood to Washington, D.C. (H.R.51) must be the first priorities of the next Congress. The League is proud to be an active coalition partner in ensuring that HR1 maintains the bold democracy reforms and voter protections that are necessary to level the playing field for everyone. We call on all legislators, no matter their party affiliation, to support any such legislation that is indisputably by and for the people

- Virginia Kase, CEO LWVUS

COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

BOOK CLUB

There is plenty of room to join book club since now all meetings are virtual. Please contact Betsy Sexton, esexton2009@lwbaltimorecounty.org for the link and time.

- Wednesday, February 24th - *The Daughters of Yalta: The Churchills, Roosevelts, and Harrimans: A Story of Love and War* by Catherine Grace Katz.
- Wednesday, March 24 - *Strangers in Their Own Land* by Arlie Russell Hochschild
- Wednesday, April 28 - *Bagman* by Rachel Maddow and Michael Yarvitz

- Betsy Sexton, Book Club Chair

COUNTY/CITY PROGRAMMING

The Leagues of Women Voters of Baltimore City and County invite you to our online event:

The Crisis in Local Journalism Wednesday, March 10 at 1pm

Over the past 15 years, more than one in five U.S. newspapers has closed, leaving hundreds of communities with no local news outlet. In other communities, papers have been purchased by national firms without strong ties to their communities, eroding local coverage there as well. What happens to a community without local news? What efforts are being made to save local papers or provide alternatives? And what can we—as consumers of local news—do to help save our newspapers?

Liz Bowie has been a reporter for The Baltimore Sun for more than 20 years, covering every aspect of education. Since joining The Sun in 1986, she has also covered environment, business, and state government news. A Baltimore native, she was a Spencer Fellow in Education Reporting at Columbia University.



Liz Bowie, Baltimore Sun reporter

You must register in advance for this meeting, <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJIs-cO-vrTsuGtfQdzWpkeOn2FV9UyUms663>. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with details for joining the event. There will be a Q&A after the presentation. Submit questions in advance to: events@lwbaltimorecounty.org. This event is open to ALL.

- Sharalyn Luciani, City/County Event Member

CONSENSUS INITIATIVE STUDY

**“YES”
or
“NO”**

In March, we will hold Consensus meetings on the LWVMD study of the Ballot Initiative Process where we will discuss the pros and cons concerning the question:

Should Maryland adopt the option for citizens-driven initiatives?

- **Direct initiatives** - an issue is presented directly to the voters and takes effect without action by the legislature or governor.
- **Indirect initiatives** - an issue is submitted to the legislature first. If the legislature takes no action or rejects it, the issue goes directly to the voters.

We will weigh advantages and disadvantages and discuss key practices used in other states. Meeting dates will be posted on our web [calendar](#) once finalized. For a detailed study paper on Ballot Initiatives, visit the Resources page on the website, lwbaltimorecounty.org.

- Betsy Sexton, Advocacy Chair

COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Policing in America has a troubled history of discrimination and abuse. On June 25, 2020 at the National Convention of the League of Women Voters of the United States the following resolution that was proposed by 47 state and local Leagues was adopted nearly unanimously: The League of Women Voters shall advocate against systemic racism in the justice system and, at a minimum, for preventing excessive force and brutality by law enforcement.

Residents of Baltimore city and county are well aware of police brutality from the high profile deaths of Freddie Gray and Korryn Gaines, as well as many others. In 2015 the ACLU released a report on deaths during police encounters in Maryland from 2010 to 2014. Key findings of that report included:

- At least 109 people died in police encounters in Maryland between 2010-2014. These deaths were dispersed throughout the state in 17 counties and Baltimore City.
- 69% of those who died in a police encounter (75 people) were Black. Blacks make up 29% of Maryland's population.
- Five Black people died for every White person who died, when the size of the Black and White populations were taken into account. Put another way, the rate at which Blacks died by a police encounter (deaths per population size) was five times that of Whites.

Police have enormous power and authority which must be used in a responsible and ethical way. We must make sure that policing is equitable, transparent and democratic. The LWVBCO, along with over 75 organizations in the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability, supports **five important reforms**:

1. **Repeal the Law Enforcement Bill of Rights (LEOBR) - HB151/SB627**
2. **Make investigations into police misconduct transparent (Anton's Law) -HB120/SB178**
3. **Limit the use of force by law enforcement - HB139/SB626**
4. **Remove police from schools- HB496**
5. **Restore control of the Baltimore Police Department to Baltimore City residents**

* Bill numbers are listed for legislation currently being considered by the General Assembly

How can you get involved? These bills will be voted on in the coming weeks. Email or call your legislators in support of these bills. Find contact information for your legislators on the Maryland General Assembly [website](#). Find out more about the reforms on the MCJPA [website](#) and read the LWVMD [Issue Paper](#).



- Ericka McDonald, LWVMD Winter Workshop attendee

WEBSITE



The website has been given a make-over and it looks FABULOUS! Thanks to volunteer webmaster Sharalyn Luciani, the webpage is more visually engaging, easier to navigate, and full of timely information on League activities and legislative issues. These changes make it easier for people to get involved, from a Blog that gives Action Alerts and Legislative updates, to a page listing Recorded Events, to an easier to use Volunteer recruitment page. For example, if you missed last month's event, [Women and Incarceration](#), visit the Resources page at www.lwvbaltimorecounty.org/ to watch the presentation. If you haven't been to the webpage lately, give it a look; you'll be impressed. To add content to the site, contact Sharalyn at sharalynlu@lwvbaltimorecounty.org.

- Stacey Morrison, Newsletter Chair

KNOW YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

A new PDF version of *Your Elected Officials* is on the League's website at www.lwvbaltimorecounty.org, on the Resources page, and currently at the printers. We have updated the contact information for our State elected officials and our Legislators, as well as the County officials. It also has the changes for our Federal officials. The website version has a live link to the emails of our elected officials.

We will not be mailing this version to members who receive the *Voter* by email; it will only be mailed to those who don't have email. If you would like a hard copy of the brochure, call Maggy Lindgren at the League office (410-377-8046) or stop by and pick one up when Maggy is at the office on Tuesdays or Thursdays.

- Neilson Andrews, Advocacy Member

COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

We are LWV



Speaking with League member Carol Wynne, even over the phone, is a most enjoyable experience. Carol has been a volunteer with the LWV Baltimore County for two and a half years and recently joined the board as an Elected Director. Carol joined the League after retiring from

her job as a geriatric nurse practitioner. With this background she believes everyone has something to offer. As a nurse, Carol's goal was to know the value and weight of each of her clients as she developed their individual plans. She kept this approach throughout her entire career. Just before retirement, she delighted a group of seniors by showing them slides of their synagogues where they grew up. This passion to recognize and tap into each person's talents and joys makes a difference.

This is why Carol joined the League. Carol sees community empowerment making a difference for individuals and their neighbors and wanted to be a part of that process at the League. She certainly hit the ground running. Carol is the Director of the Health Care Committee where she is involved in the National Single Payer issue to bring equitable and accessible health care for all, among other things. She is the League's Director for Maryland Redistricting, which supports legislative bodies being apportioned by population and not partisan gerrymandering. And she has also been active in the Membership Committee's efforts to increase the League's membership diversity.

Carol is the League. She likes the ability to work together as a group of voices to have an impact on an issue. Carol wants to increase the voice of communities and their needs and she brings strength to the table to advocate for these needs. Carol is exceptional in her desires to make a difference and to improve the lives of Baltimore County residents. Her understanding of people and their promise supports her advocacy to empower voices. The League is grateful to have her on board.

- Kathy Skelton, Newsletter Member



New Members LWV Baltimore County Welcomes You!

- * Zoey Stevenson
- * Susan Zator

GET INVOLVED!



Are you a social media wiz? Do you think shaping the public image of a group is fun? Do you like talking with people? If you answered yes to any of these, then we have the job for you! If you're interested in taking on one of the volunteer jobs below, please contact our Membership Chair, Ericka McDonald, at elmcd@lwbaltimorecounty.org.

Communications Chair: Non-partisan LWV advocate to lead the Communications Committee team, including developing a marketing strategy and promoting the league through social media, publications, and the league website. The work of the Communications Committee is essential to the league's purpose to inform our members and the community about issues that impact the democratic process in Baltimore County and Maryland. The Communications Chair will help us achieve our goal to be current, accurate, and informative to provide information on all aspects of the league's work,

Social Media Coordinator(s): Maintain the LWVBCO's Facebook site, including non-partisan posts and advertising league events. Maintain the Twitter and Instagram accounts for LWVBCO, including non-partisan posts and advertising league events.

Membership Committee Member for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Volunteer(s) to work with the Membership Committee to coordinate the recruitment of people from underrepresented groups and work with other committees to ensure inclusion and belonging.

- Ericka McDonald, Membership Chair

NEWSLETTER

The newsletter is getting a delivery system overhaul. Since the newsletter is a perk of League membership, members will continue to receive an email version, but printed copies will only go to those members who request one. This change helps us save on costs as well as reduce our impact on the environment. You'll soon receive an email in the next few weeks asking you to choose for the email only or print copy option; please let us know your preference. For our non-member supporters, you will continue to receive email updates, but you will need to visit our website to download a copy of the newsletter.

- Stacey Morrison, Newsletter Chair

COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

EDUCATION

Maryland’s Education Future

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Act became a law on Feb 12, 2021, after the MD Senate voted 31-16 to **OVERRIDE** Governor Hogan’s veto. The law commits the state to a 10 year strategic plan to more equitably fund education measures across all communities. Some of the law’s goals include an expansion of pre-k programs and career education courses for high school students, higher salaries and better training for teachers, more resources for at risk students, more money for schools where many students live in poverty, and greater administrative transparency and accountability.



The passing of this law comes after years of advocacy at the individual, community and organizational level. Our voices are powerful. Congratulations to all of those who helped make this law a reality.

- Camille Marx, Education Chair

Social and Emotional Well-Being

Throughout the COVID pandemic staff, students and parents, have struggled with virtual learning and other stressors. Baltimore County Public Schools has arranged for students in grade six through twelve, their parents and teachers to learn about social – emotional issues. Carefully selected national experts will present the following topics:

- positive mindsets
- working through grief and trauma
- coping with anxiety and self-doubt
- self-care
- mental health
- well-being

Registration has passed for this program but it is reassuring to all of us that this area of learning is available. Look for other activities by viewing the county school website at www.bcps.org.

- Camille Marx, Education Chair

COUNTY COUNCIL OBSERVER CORPS

At their legislative session on January 19, Baltimore County Council approved contracts that were awarded for emergency purchases of goods and services during the COVID pandemic. Here is a sampling:

- N95 masks for Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) reopening (\$138,615.95)
- Clear teacher and student screens for schools reopening (\$3,497,025)
- Gloves for use in schools (\$101,200.00)
- Comcast Internet Essentia Services for 10,000 families (\$716,400)
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the Health Department for long term care facilities (\$588,550)
- Three thousand room air purifiers and filters for county government and schools (\$6,492,000)

At their legislative session on January 4, Baltimore County Council approved receipt of two grants deemed emergency measures due to the COVID public health catastrophe and public safety emergency:

- **Bill 1-22 Dept. of Commerce Hotel Relief Grant** – Emergency Measure in the amount of \$3,529, 894
- **Bill 1-21 Dept. of Commerce Restaurant Relief Grant** – Emergency Measure in the amount of \$4,248,628.

PENDING LEGISLATION

Bill 11-21 County Charter – County Council – Term of Office (Quirk and Crandell)

Would set term limits of no more than three full four-year terms for county council members, beginning in 2022. This proposed charter amendment would be on the ballot in the Nov. 8, 2022 General Election.

- **Discussed at the Work Session on Tuesday, Feb. 23 at 4pm**
- **Vote will occur at the Legislative Session on Monday, March 1 at 6pm**

Resolution 16-21 Amendment – 10 Year Solid Waste Management Plan

Adding an office building recycling amendment to the in Baltimore County solid waste management plan.

- **Discussed at the Work Session on Tuesday, Feb. 9 at 4pm**
- **Vote will occur at the Legislative Session on Tuesday, Feb. 16 at 6pm.**

- Betsy Sexton, Observer Corps Chair

COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

HEALTHCARE 2021 - RACIAL DISPARITY

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the disparity of healthcare among races. Why do BIPOC communities die at three to five times the rate of whites? Why do marginalized communities die younger and suffer more serious cases of COVID-19?

The League of Women Voters Maryland has a position statement from 1994 that states:

- “Every US resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes disease prevention, health promotion, health education, primary care (including pre-natal and reproductive care), acute care, long term care, and mental health care.
- Every US resident should have access to affordable, quality in and out patient behavioral health care, including needed medications, dental, vision, and hearing.
- The League favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums.”

The LWVUS is actively involved in supporting a single payer system to end this current healthcare crisis and initiate a healthier America for all US residents. US residents who have been marginalized by the current healthcare system must have equal access to the same quality of healthcare without fear of financial hardship or discrimination. Quality healthcare must be available to all residents based on need and not contingent upon ability to pay, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or language.

This year, the Maryland General Assembly has capped the number of bills a Senator may introduce to 25 and the House is encouraging a thoughtful approach to any bills they may introduce. Some important healthcare bills that are being put forward in an effort fight health, social, and economic disparities to watch are:

- **HB123/SB003**- to preserve access to telehealth. Governor Hogan has ordered the State Departments of Health to reimburse Medicaid telehealth services for all COVID-19 patients. This Bill would make permanent and expand access to telehealth coverage.
- **HB 28**-to mandate health care professionals to receive implicit bias training through the Cultural and Linguistic Health Care Professional Competency Program and require the Office of Minority Health and Disparities to publish an annual report card on health care disparities. These disparities include differences in morbidity and mortality rates of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, infant mortality, asthma, and COVID-19. This bill, when passed, will take effect 2023.

Ensuring healthcare of all Maryland residents is a position at the forefront of League of Women Voters National, State, and Chapter work. The US has the lowest life expectancy of all comparable countries. The US is the only developed country without universal healthcare. It has the highest pharmaceutical costs in the developed world. These issues, including a single payer healthcare system will be discussed in further articles.

- Carol Wynne, Healthcare Chair

OF INTEREST

Join the Conversations

February 17 at 6pm



Join the Hon. Jed S. Rakoff, Senior US District Judge and expert on white collar crime, and Hernandez Stroud, counsel in Brennan Center's Justice Program as they discuss the shortcomings of the country's legal system and propose paths to reform, topics Judge

Rakoff explores in his new book, *Why the Innocent Plead Guilty and the Guilty Go Free: And Other Paradoxes of Our Broken Legal System*. This event is sponsored by the Brennan Center in partnership with NYU's John Brademas Center.

Register [here](#) for the event.

Or sign up at www.brennancenter.org/events.

February 18 at 1pm



The Reunited States is a powerful and urgent documentary that follows the unsung heroes on the difficult journey of bridging our political and racial divides. The film urges us to consider that everyone

has a role to play in reuniting the country. Join Director Ben Rekhi and Joan Smith of the LWV-Snohomish as they moderate a conversation about the film and its message. The film is offered by the LWV Civil Discourse Network and the National Institute for Civil Discourse.

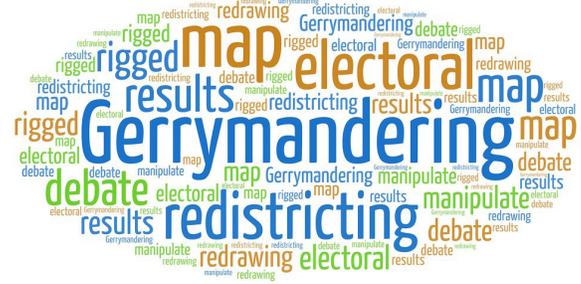
Register [here](#) for the conversation.

Visit www.reunitedstates.tv to see the film.

COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

FAIR REPRESENTATION, FAIR MAPS

The League of Women Voters United States has worked for decades at the local, state, and national levels for voter districts that reflect the full diversity of all communities. The importance of building strength and power across all communities is never more necessary than now. Multiple pandemic issues (health, economics, income, education, jobs, etc.), the Census Bureau's missing reporting deadlines, and the need for fair and equal representation, demands our immediate and active involvement now.



The LWVUS reached a consensus position in 2004 that is still an operational position today:

1. A state redistricting process that promotes fair and effective representation in both houses of Maryland State Government.
2. An independent commission was created in 2021 as a multi-partisan Redistricting Commission.
3. Standards on which the redistricting plans is based should include:
 - a. A substantially equal population
 - b. Geographically contiguity
 - c. Geographic compactness
4. Final approval by the General Assembly for the legislature and congressional redistricting plans
5. An amendment to the Maryland Constitution affirming that the redistricting for the House of Representatives should occur only once every ten years after the census
6. The standards on which a redistricting plan is based must:
 - a. Be enforceable in court
 - b. Require substantially equal population
 - c. Geographic contiguity
 - d. Equal representation of racial and linguistic minorities
 - e. Partisan fairness
 - f. Preservation and protection of “communities of interest”
 - g. Respect for boundaries of municipalities and counties
 - h. Reject the protection of incumbents and preferential treatment for any political party

This is just the first article in a series of educational outreach articles to bring to light the national LWV effort for fair, transparent, and accountable redistricting in Maryland. Follow us @ LWVMD on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram

- Carol Wynne, Redistricting Chair

OF INTEREST

Watch and Learn

February 21 at 9pm



Coded Bias: Are You Being Targeted, is a film viewing and discussion sponsored by the LWV Los Angeles. The film explores the reality that facial recognition does not see dark-skinned faces accurately and one women's journey to push for legislation to govern against bias in the algorithms that impact us all. By registering (there is a \$10 donation), you will receive the link to the film, available from Feb. 15-21. The 90-minute panel discussion will be held on Sunday, Feb. 21st at 9pm.

Register [here](#) for the event.

Or visit my.lwv.org/california/los-angeles to register.

Aired on January 27



Live with the League: Are All Votes Equal, presented by the LWV San Diego, featured League members who discussed the history of the Electoral College; the National Popular Vote Compact and the League's support for it; and the national efforts and the current status of Common Cause. This discussion shows that there is a better way to view our divided country different from the red/blue map shown following each election

Click [here](#) to view the video discussion. Video can also be found under the Event Video section at my.lwv.org/california/san-diego.

OF INTEREST

The Hill We Climb - Inauguration Poem



Amanda Gorman
2021 Inaugural Poet

At the 2021 Presidential Inauguration, Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman delivered a powerful poem of hope for our nation. Her honest look at our history was joined by a faith that the American spirit which resides in us all will help us continue to build a better future for all of our citizens.

The Hill We Climb

When day comes, we ask ourselves where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.
We've braved the belly of the beast.
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,
and the norms and notions of what "just" is isn't always justice.
And yet, the dawn is ours before we knew it.
Somehow we do it.
Somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken,
but simply unfinished.
We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting for one.

And yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine,
but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect.
We are striving to forge our union with purpose.
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters, and conditions of man.
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us,
but what stands before us.
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside.
We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.
We seek harm to none and harmony for all.
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:
That even as we grieved, we grew.
That even as we hurt, we hoped.
That even as we tired, we tried.
That we'll forever be tied together, victorious.
Not because we will never again know defeat, but because we will never again sow division.

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them afraid.
If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade, but in all the bridges we've made.
That is the promise to glade, the hill we climb, if only we dare.

It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit.
It's the past we step into and how we repair it.
We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it.
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.
This effort very nearly succeeded.
But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated.
In this truth, in this faith, we trust,
for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us.
This is the era of just redemption.
We feared it at its inception.
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour,
but within it, we found the power to author a new chapter, to offer hope and laughter to ourselves.
So while once we asked, 'How could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?' now we assert, 'How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?'

We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be:
A country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free.
We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change, our children's birthright.

So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.
With every breath from my bronze-pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.
We will rise from the golden hills of the west.
We will rise from the wind-swept north-east where our forefathers first realized revolution.
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the mid-western states.
We will rise from the sun-baked south.
We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover.
In every known nook of our nation, in every corner called our country,
our people, diverse and beautiful, will emerge, battered and beautiful.
When day comes, we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid.
The new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.

OF INTEREST

Back From The Brink Campaign: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War

On Oct. 24, 2020, Honduras became the 50th nation to ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). On Jan. 22, 2021, this Treaty, which acknowledges the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons¹, entered into force. At long last, nuclear weapons will take their place alongside other weapons of mass destruction: biological and chemical weapons, and indiscriminate killers of civilians like landmine and cluster bombs. Now all will be banned by U.N. Treaty or Convention.

The Treaty's preamble acknowledges the catalog of global destruction these bombs cause including the disproportionate effect on girls and women. These weapons whose effects "transcend national borders, pose grave implications for human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, the global economy, food security and the health of current and future generations, and have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, including as a result of ionizing radiation."²

Under this Treaty, it will be a violation to: develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile, transfer, receive, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or nuclear devices. It will be a violation to assist, encourage, or induce, or seek help to do any of the above as it would be to allow use of its territory or territory under its control for any of the above. It creates a path for nuclear-armed countries to join the treaty and verification mechanisms to ensure countries comply with the irreversible destruction of their nuclear weapons. It requires assistance to victims and remediation of environmental contamination.³ Among the nations that have ratified are Austria, Ireland, Mexico, Venezuela, Thailand, South Africa, Nigeria, and New Zealand, 1/8 of the world's population, though none of the 9 nuclear nations nor NATO nations have. The United States is counting on "deterrence to save us from nuclear war" despite the risks from impulsive world leaders, cyber-attacks, and computer failures. There are disturbing examples of human and technical error that almost led to an accidental launch of nuclear weapons in the past.⁴

That nuclear weapons are dangerous to possess, expensive to maintain, and contaminate the environment irrevocably is no secret. The new nuclear arms race has created unsustainable expenses at a time when nuclear nations are fighting the economy-busting pandemic. The United States is #1 in military budget, nuclear weapons

budget and COVID-19 deaths in the world. Cost estimates for the whole nuclear weapons complex is between \$35 and \$67 billion a year; that money could have paid for rent subsidies to prevent evictions, masks and ventilators to prevent deaths.⁵

Even when the United States hasn't ratified a Treaty in the past, the stigma contributes to reduced manufacture and use.⁶ We have not ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Landmine Convention, or the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Yet we stopped producing landmines in 1997 and stopped using them in 2002.⁷ The United States has stopped producing cluster bombs though it refuses to foreswear producing them in the future.⁸ Similarly, we stopped testing nuclear weapons under President H.W. Bush (although President Trump threatened to renew testing). Corporations like Lockheed Martin and universities like Johns Hopkins (Applied Physics Lab)⁹ will have to confront the stigma of profiting off contracts for weapons systems that are illegal according to UN law.

A public groundswell for negotiating treaties with other nuclear nations could lead to talks to negotiate true disarmament. This Treaty provides the framework. The **Back From the Brink** (BFTB) campaign in the United States is the mechanism for building that public momentum for a change in dangerous US nuclear policy, a commitment to negotiating with other nuclear nations and support for the TPNW. BFTB calls on the US to: 1. renounce first use; 2. take nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; 3. end Presidential sole authority to initiate a nuclear launch; 4. cancel the \$1.7 trillion nuclear weapons overhaul; and 5. pursue global elimination of nuclear weapons.¹⁰ Resolutions have been endorsed nationwide by over 300 diverse organizations and adopted by more than 50 municipalities and 6 state legislative bodies, including Maryland's Baltimore City, Washington DC, and Montgomery County. All call for a verifiable agreement among nuclear states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

If you would like to learn more about how to be part of the BFTB campaign, visit their website at www.prevent-nuclearwar.org.

- Dr. Gwen L. DuBois, co-founder
Prevent Nuclear War Maryland

1 <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmxc.cloudfront.net/tectodevms/pages/2417/attachments/original/1571248124/TPNW-English1.pdf?1571248124>

2 *ibid*

3 *ibid*

4 <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2015/04/Close%2520Calls%2520with%2520Nuclear%2520Weapons.pdf>

5 https://www.icanw.org/healthcare_costs

6 <http://www.icbl.org/en-gb/problem/why-landmines-are-still-a-problem.aspx>

7 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/03/united-states-landmine-policy-questions-and-answers#>

8 <http://www.the-m2onitor.org/en-gb/the-issues/faqs/most-common/how-many-countries-produce-mines-or-cluster-munitions.aspx>

9 <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmxc.cloudfront.net/ican/pages/405/attachments/original/1573590665/ICAN-Schools-of-mass-Destruction-Executive-Summary-nov2019.pdf?1573590665>

10 <https://preventnuclearwar.org/our-five-policy-solutions/>

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