



Volume 2020-2021 Issue 9 May/June 2021

CALENDAR

May

May 17, 6:30pm	Baltimore County Master Plan 2030 community meetings for Districts 1 and 4
May 18, 6:30pm	Baltimore County Master Plan 2030 community meetings for Districts 2 and 3
May 19, 6:30pm	Baltimore County Master Plan 2030 community meetings for Districts 5, 6 and 7
May 26, 11am	County/City Speaker Series: The Digital Divide with Alex Marré, Ph.D.
May 26, 7:30pm	Book Club - <i>His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, A Life</i> by Jonathan Alter
May 27, 7pm	LWVUS DEI Webinar: Working Across Generations
May 31	Memorial Day

June

June 5, 8am-4pm	LWVMD Annual Convention , virtual
June 17, 7pm	LWVUS DEI Webinar: DEI Lens and Governance
June 18, 12:30-2:30pm	LWVBCo Annual Meeting , Irvine Nature Center and virtual

In Honor of Jewish American Heritage Month

We acknowledge and give thanks to the Jewish American women who blazed a trail in politics at the national level.



Florence Prag Kahn,
1st Jewish American US
Congresswoman, 1925



Dianne Feinstein, joint
1st Jewish American US
Senator, 1992



Barbara Boxer, joint 1st
Jewish American US
Senator, 1992

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

PRESIDENTS' LETTER



Tana Hamilton,
President LWVBCo

Last year, we faced several threats to our democracy: voter suppression through procedural disenfranchisement, purging of voter rolls, redrawing of political districts to secure those already in power, and unlimited campaign contributions that prevent people without resources from running for office. This year, these threats still exist and have even expanded. We saw a historic threat to our democracy Jan. 6, 2021 when some Americans stormed the U.S. Capitol to prevent the peaceful transfer of presidential power.

But nothing is more of a threat to our democracy than fear, hatred, and misinformation. As our nation becomes more ethnically diverse, people who fear losing their idea of “American” culture rally for anti-globalist and anti-inclusive policies. Recent xenophobic rhetoric has targeted Asians for the origin of the COVID-19 virus (Mueller, 2020) and stereotyped Muslims as terrorists. The annual Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) report on hate crimes found, “hate-motivated murders, largely committed by white supremacists, spiked to their highest number in 28 years” (Villarreal, 2020). In addition, misinformation from politicians about COVID-19 has literally cost peoples’ lives.

The LWVBCo envisions a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate. Racism in America is entrenched in our history and is systemic. Sadly, even the League of Women Voter’s founders did not include Black women in our women’s suffrage movement. Systemic racism impacts minority access to housing, healthcare, employment, education, and a fair criminal justice system.

This year, millions watched the recording of George Floyd being killed by police. As he lay crying for his mother, the civil servants who should have protected him held him down until he took his last breath. Injustices such as this have been happening under our noses for decades, but a new generation has been awakened to this fight. Our role in voter registration, education, and advocacy is as important now as it ever was.

Our board and our members are energized to protect the right to vote for all people, and to bring them the information they need to make informed voting decisions. We are fulfilling our education role through monthly speakers in a joint effort between the County and City Leagues. A few of our advocacy committees include Education, Healthcare and Transportation – all key issues for providing equal access to success in our county.

How can we ensure that the League stays relevant? We commit to including people who are passionate about our mission. This year, we gained nearly 30 new members. However, our growth is not just about increasing numbers. We need to consciously seek out diversity in our membership. Our League should look like the people we represent in Baltimore County. The different ideas and perspectives that we bring will make our efforts stronger and keep us relevant.

The board is committed to creating an environment that is open and diverse, as evidenced by our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. Diversity includes various cultures, races, religions, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and disabilities. We have worked diligently this year on our structure and policies to create an environment that values our longtime members and welcomes new and diverse members. As we approach a post-COVID environment, we plan to provide opportunities for members to gather and grow. Inclusivity is how we will combat fear, hatred, and misinformation. I encourage you to recommit yourself to the League. Together, we aspire to every person in Baltimore County having the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate in our democracy.

References:

Mueller, Z. (2020, April 14). 2020 AdWatch report: Trump, GOP use dog-whistle politics to stoke fears, divide voters and deflect from Trump’s failures. <https://americasvoice.org/blog/2020-coronavirus-ads/>.

Villarreal, D. (2020, Nov. 16). Hate crimes under Trump surged nearly 20 percent says FBI Report. <https://www.newsweek.com/hate-crimes-under-trump-surged-nearly-20-percent-says-fbi-report-1547870>.

Sincerely,

Tana R Hamilton

Tana Hamilton, President

LWVUS

JUNETEENTH: A Celebration of Emancipation and Black Liberation*

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States, and just one of several “Emancipation Days” observed by Black diasporic communities in the Caribbean, Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. The holiday is celebrated on June 19th (thus the name, Juneteenth) because, on that date in 1865, Union soldiers announced to enslaved persons in Texas that the U.S. Civil War had ended and that they had been freed from bondage by the Emancipation Proclamation (two years prior in 1863). Freed Black and Afro-Indigenous people from Texas brought the celebration with them when they migrated to nearby places like Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Mexico and—even farther—to California, Oregon, and Washington state.

Juneteenth is a communal celebration, nowadays commemorated with events like block parties, cookouts, parades, and rodeos. In my home state of Oklahoma, I witnessed my aunt organize a two-day block party complete with competitions, games, food, and live performances. Like many memorial occasions in the Black diasporic tradition, Juneteenth is a celebratory, instead of solemn, commemoration. Festivities I witnessed in both Oklahoma City, OK, and Oakland, CA, centered joyous observation of the long-fought for end of U.S. chattel slavery and the status of Black liberation in this country.

However, the fight for Black liberation was not resolved with the end of slavery and the close of the U.S. Civil War. The U.S. has failed to extend the promise of liberty to all, and while no one is more cognizant of that fact than Black—and Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous—people, recent high-profile killings of Black people have similarly spurred global enlightenment.

Anti-Blackness and Racial Disparities in the U.S.

Activists in this country and abroad are demanding justice and accountability for abuse and killings suffered by Black people across the globe (at the hands of police). Activists are also demanding better conditions for Black people in every area of life because of the racial disparities that still exist. For example, White households hold significantly more wealth than Black households even when educational attainment, employment status, income levels, and home-ownership between White and Black households are the same. A GAO study of the 2013-2014 K-12 school year and the Civil Rights Data Collection data from the 2015-2016 school year showed that Black students were overrepresented in school disciplinary actions, were referred to law enforcement for arrest, and were arrested at rates disproportionate to their population size.

Antiracism requires us to avoid pathologizing Blackness—insisting that racial outcome disparities are due to a defect in Black people—and, instead, acknowledge how the conditions for racial outcome disparities have been systemic and structural. Black community leaders and antiracist advocates have created several organizations and movements over the past 150-plus years in pursuit of Black liberation. If nothing else, we should be familiar with at least two recently created ones: The #SayHerName campaign was created in 2014 to bring awareness to the names and stories of Black women and girls who have suffered racist police violence. The #BlackLivesMatter movement, and later the Black Lives Matter Global Network, were founded and developed in response to numerous failures to hold anyone accountable for the killings of Black folks, including Trayvon Martin, Tanisha Anderson, Sandra Bland, and Michael Brown.

The League's Work to Expand and Protect the Vote

Leagues across the country have acknowledged our complicity in the historic failure of democracy to work for all, including the exclusion of Black women in the League's early years and the abandonment of Black suffragists as a whole. Today, we have not only expanded our voting rights advocacy to all, but we've also expanded our advocacy portfolio to include climate change, gun safety, immigration, and LGBTQ+ protections, just to name a few. We also partner and work in coalition with many organizations who fight for economic and criminal justice for Black people.

The League participated in 21 lawsuits in 18 states to hold election officials accountable for failure to mitigate the effects the COVID-19 pandemic—which disproportionately affects Black and Indigenous communities—was having on elections. We supported several efforts to prevent voter purges and to defeat vote dilution and racial gerrymandering in state and federal courts. We also lobbied on behalf of the Voting Rights Advancement Act, a bill that would restore the Voting Rights Act protections stripped in the 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* Supreme Court decision. Because, as we saw in Georgia's June 2020 primary, voter suppression tactics are alive and well, and we know Black voters are disenfranchised when these tactics persist. The League will continue to lead work in expanding democracy and protecting the vote, on behalf of all people, until this country reflects the world we want to live in.

- 6/19/20 LWVUS blog post by Kentiya Orange

* This article contains the majority of the original piece's content, however the newsletter editor has removed some lines of content that referenced specific activity occurring last year. To view the article in its entirety, visit <https://www.lwv.org/blog/juneteenth-celebration-emancipation-and-black-liberation>.

COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

BOOK CLUB

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

- Wednesday, May 26 - *His Very Best: Jimmy Carter, A Life* by Jonathan Alter
- 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 Digital Divide: How can we bridge the gap between the Internet haves and the have nots? Wednesday, May 26, 11:00am



Broadband Internet access has become a necessity in our increasingly Internet-driven society. Those without access to broadband service are at a severe disadvantage in accessing good jobs, virtual education, telemedicine appointments and much more. Alex Marré will explain the many barriers urban and rural residents face in accessing the Internet, as well as state and national efforts to increase access.

Alex Marré, Ph.D., is a regional economist at the Baltimore branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. He monitors and briefs the public on regional economic conditions and conducts research on economic issues. Previously, as an economist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he tracked economic conditions in rural America. His research has informed the White House Rural Council, the National Academies of Sciences, the National Science Foundation, the Southern Legislative Conference, and the American Association of Community Colleges, among others. Dr. Marré holds a Ph.D. in agricultural and resource economics from Oregon State University.

You must register in advance for this meeting: <https://bit.ly/32Mzb9q>. 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@lwvbaltimorecounty.org. This event is open to ALL.

- Sharalyn Luciani, City/County Event Member

EDUCATION

This year of COVID has been a challenging one for students, parents and staff. Since last spring, educators have dealt with many changes and problems that have made teaching during this crisis very difficult. Some of the biggest challenges the teachers have had to face include adapting to four different learning models, WiFi outages that block access to teaching for distance learners, and multiple tech crises. As a result of these problems, the Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO) issued a Work-to-Rule motion on April 22, 2021, to encourage the Board of Education to address educator's concerns.

Work-to-Rule means that staff will do no voluntary, unpaid hours until the school system resolves several

key issues:

- Resolve the internet problems
- Develop a plan to allow for two different cohorts of teachers, one for virtual instruction and the other for in-person instruction
- Revoke previous excessing of staff and guarantee there will be no reduction of staff for FY22
- Provide information about the January personal data breach.



(continued on page 5)

COMMITTEES AND REPORTS

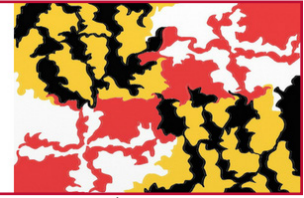
REDISTRICTING

With an election in 2022 a little over a year away, candidates are not yet able to file for election because the census data is late. This data, which decides districts based on population, will not be in the hands of the candidates until September at the earliest because of delays caused by the pandemic. Additionally, before those numbers are analyzed in Maryland, prisoners in jails have to be reassigned to their homes, not the jails where they temporarily reside; this process can take an additional month, causing further delay before candidates can file. Candidates must know their district in order to determine: Do they live in their district once the census numbers are tallied? Will Maryland General Assembly change districts related to population, race, political party, or communities of interest?

When politicians are involved in their own interests, and want districts that meet their re-election goals, it is called gerrymandering. The definition of gerrymandering is to divide a district to give one political party an electoral majority while concentrating the voting strength of the opposition in as few districts as possible. The political business of gerrymandering is not new. Elbridge Gerry was governor of Massachusetts in 1812. He signed a bill that created a partisan district in Boston that was compared to the shape of a salamander. Governor Gerry wanted to keep his political party in power. This is a negative term resulting in a district that was known as a gerrymander. This foul political play did not seem to affect Gerry's political future as he went on to serve as vice-president under James Madison.

In 2019, the Supreme Court ruled there was no federal law to stop gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is found in every state, but Maryland ranks in the top 5 of the

Tame the Gerrymander



worst in the nation for how we draw our congressional and legislative districts. In preparation for the redrawing of districts, the Governor has appointed a Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission (MCRC) made up of 3 democrats, 3 republicans, and 3 independents. They are held to Maryland law which mandates their meetings be open and transparent. The intent is to avoid back room deals and politicians cutting up maps to meet their election needs.

The Maryland State League has a committee that is actively following the MCRC, to which each League chapter is invited to participate. The LWVMD Redistricting Committee, together with their coalition partners, is planning on educating the public on why citizens need to be aware of their power to make maps of districts they want. Communities will learn reasons to avoid gerrymandered districts and how best to use their voices. This state-wide push will give communities of interest and/or marginalized communities education on why and how to draw their own maps and the process of submitting them to their candidates/legislatures.

Changes in district lines could affect us all. The need for a fair election process can give all communities a voice. If you would like to get involved in the LWVMD Redistricting Committee, please contact Beth Hufnagel at Bhufnagel@lwmmd.org.

- Carol Wynne, LWVMD Redistricting Committee Member

EDUCATION, Cont.



Public support is needed to have these issues resolved. The LWVBCO's policy position on Education includes support for a high quality of education; the problems the teachers faced since COVID hinder this. Our Board is supportive of TABCO's efforts and encourages members to write to Baltimore County Board of Education, boe@mybcps.info, and tell them to listen to educators about the problems they face in the concurrent teaching model.

MEMBERSHIP

We are LWV



League member Phyllis Panopolous

Phyllis Panopolous joined the LWVBCo ten years ago after a friend, who was a member, introduced her to the League; she has loved it ever since. Phyllis is getting her “feet wet” as a Board member after having joined the Board last June. She is hoping to meet her Board members in person when the pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Phyllis works with the Transportation Committee for the LWVBCo and sees getting the MTA funding passed as an accomplishment. Bringing diversity and inclusion to public policy is a goal for Phyllis. Before COVID, she loved working with naturalization candidates and continues to enthusiastically support their process. Registering voters is also a favorite of hers. Phyllis would go to the Farmers’ Market and the Y to meet and register voters. “Getting the word out to people about the League and our policies is great fun,” says Phyllis, who thinks talking to others about the League’s non-partisanship and hearing their opinions is important. She believes our democracy needs groups like the League, especially with voter suppression laws being passed in some states.

Phyllis Panopolous is the League. She sees education and civic lessons as very important and a good mission for the League. She believes it is grass root connections that inform our communities and advance our democracy. After watching the Baltimore County Executive debate at the public library and she realized that the local level is where democracy flourishes. Phyllis’ talents and dedication to the League and its mission is a testament to her character and citizenship.

- Kathy Skelton, Newsletter Committee Member



New Members

LWV Baltimore County Welcomes You!

- * Lisa Barkan
- * Patricia Brown
- * Paige Garczynski
- * Jon Hyman
- * Debra Kane
- * Nancy Strohming

Join a Committee

Fundraising Chair

If you are someone who likes raising money and building relationships with potential donors, then the Fundraising Chair is the job for you!

As Chair, you will develop and implement a plan for raising funds through events, donations, and grants as well as lead our charitable giving campaigns. This position works closely with our Board and other committee chairs.

By taking on this role, you can help make a difference in Baltimore County! Please contact our Membership Chair, Ericka McDonald, at elmcd@lwvbaltimore-county.org, or complete our online volunteer form to get involved.



Lifetime Members

Membership is vital to the League, for without members and member volunteers, we would not be able to carry out our mission of empowering residents through voter registration, education and advocacy. We at the LWVBCo are grateful to all our members and are thankful for all of your support. This month, we’d like to give an extra thank you to all our Lifetime Members, those of you who have been a part of the League for over 50 years.

An extra special thank you to:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Joined</u>
Carolyn Fitzgerald	1946
Ethel Berney	1956
Sarajane Goodman	1960
Sheila Buchdal	1964
Lois Hybl	1964
Aurelia Burt	1965
Anne Libis	1967

Your commitment and dedication to the League is extraordinary and inspirational. It is an honor to be in the League with you..

LEAGUE EVENTS AND INFORMATION

LWVBCo Annual Meeting June 18



For the first time since last March, we have scheduled an in-person meeting for the Annual Meeting of the LWV Baltimore County. If you don't feel comfortable being in a group, we also plan to air it virtually. We will hold the Annual Meeting outside in the tent at the Irvine Nature Center on Friday, June 18, from 12:30-2:30pm. In light of the pandemic, we will not have a buffet, but will have individual box lunches. Irvine is located at 11201 Garrison Forrest Road, Owings Mills, MD 21117.

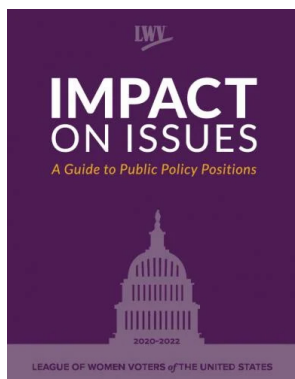
Stephen W. Lafferty, Director of the Baltimore County Office of Planning, will be our speaker. Mr. Lafferty was the delegate from District 42 for many years. He joined the administration of County Executive John Olszewski as the Chief of Sustainability and is now the Director of Planning. We asked Mr. Lafferty to speak on Planning for Affordable Housing in Baltimore County.

The Annual Meeting booklet will be emailed to all members within the next week. It will contain a summary of our activities over the last year. It will also contain the items that must be voted on during the Annual Meeting: the budget, a bylaw change on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion, nominations and Program Planning for the coming year. If you would like a hard copy of the booklet, please call or email Maggy Lindgren at 410-377-8046 or contact@lwvbaltimorecounty.org.

Reservations must be made by June 11. There is a reservation form in the Annual Meeting booklet and on the League's website, www.lwvbaltimorecounty.org. The cost is \$25.00 per person and you may mail your checks to the League office at 6600 York Road, Suite 211, Baltimore, MD 21212. You may also pay through PayPal on the website. Please include your choice for a sandwich.

- Neilson Andrews, Treasurer

LWVUS Impact on Issues Guide



Impact on Issues is an indispensable resource for League members. The guide gives members a clear understanding of LWVUS positions, how they interrelate, and how they can complement and reinforce state, local, and regional Inter-League Organization (ILO) positions. Organized so that "Taking Action"

is front and center, the guide contains League Principles; the LWVUS' public policy positions; and the background for these positions, including significant actions and achievements. Though the LWVUS' history of advocacy goes back to the organization's founding, the 2020-2022 Impact on Issues covers advocacy efforts beginning in the 1960s. The intention behind this guide is to inspire Leagues to use national positions to act in our own communities, thereby strengthening the League's impact on issues at all levels of government. Visit <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues> to download or order your copy.

LWVMD Convention June 5



Registration is now open for the LWVMD 2021 Convention, which takes place on Saturday, June 5, from 8am - 4pm. This virtual event will include breakout rooms by county, a presentation by Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott, and a video welcome by Maryland's US Senator Chris Van Hollen. This convention is your chance to contribute to important discussions about the direction of the LWVMD over the next three years and vote for new board officers. You'll also hear about the State League's legislative actions, participate in workshops on Communications and DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), and vote on a budget.

The convention is open to all members and only costs \$10 per person. The LWVMD's website has an online version of the convention's workbook where you can preview the proposed state program; study proposals; bios for current and nominated board members; and much more. To register for this event, visit the Events page of the LWVMD at www.lwvmd.org.

STUDENT SUPPORT NETWORK

Distributions and Transition to Opening of Schools in Fall and Updates on State Legislation

The Student Support Network's Board of Directors has recently been reflecting on the past 14 months and the over \$5 million dollars in food and essential supplies that we have distributed to families in Baltimore County. This support of the Network's donors and more than 100 dedicated volunteers have made this incredible response possible. Since March of 2020, the Network has distributed food and essential non-food supplies, including diapers and period products, at three distribution sites: Parkville High School, Owings Mills High School, and Loch Raven Technical Academy.

Given the plan to re-open BCPS schools this fall, the Network will be ending the large-scale food and supplies distributions on Wednesday, June 30, 2021. During July and August, we will be busy preparing for the re-opening of our 13 Network schools and their Rooms of Support. The Network works to improve the lives of students living in poverty by providing food and other basic necessities, as well as advocacy and support.

When schools re-open in the fall, we will be facing an alarming 10% increase in the number of students living in severe poverty, i.e., qualifying for Free and Reduced Price Meals. Over 58,000 students now fall into this category, about 53% of all students in the system. In the thirteen Network schools alone, over 5,200 students live in severe poverty, including more than 400 children in families experiencing homelessness. We are currently collecting school supplies and backpacks for our students so they will be ready to return to school in the fall. Please visit <https://studentsupportnetwork.org/events/> for information on how you can help!

The Network is pleased to see the following state legislation that passed this year, to benefit our mission:

- **HB 205 / SB 427, Public Schools Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products**, provides state funding so that public schools can make menstrual hygiene products available at no charge to students. Period poverty is a major cause of absenteeism for girls in school! Period products cannot be purchased with SNAP, which supports many families in purchasing food, and can cost over \$150 a year. This bill was championed by one of the Network's volunteers – Phoebe Evans Letocha. She and her daughter Abby have led our programs to supply period products at food distribution events, and have helped thousands of girls and women in need of these products.
- **HB 891 / SB 767** establishes a **Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program** for colleges in Maryland. The Network is pleased to see this additional support from the state, in the form of a matching grant program, to address student hunger and basic food needs on campus, raise awareness about services available on campus, and build partnerships to address food insecurity.
- Finally, the Network is pleased that **HB 831 / SB 723** passed, which establishes a **Maryland Food System Resiliency Council** to address food insecurity in the state.

- Laurie Taylor-Mitchell, SSN President, and Tam Lynne Kelley, SSN Board Member



Photo left: Distribution at Parkville HS last winter.

Photo right: the "Loch Raven Haven" at Loch Raven HS before the pandemic. The Network is now re-stocking Rooms of Support which were emptied when schools were closed in 2020.



BALTIMORE COUNTY

Baltimore County Master Plan

As stated on their website, Baltimore County's Master Plan 2030 provides the vision and strategies for growth over the next 10 years. As a plan that will serve as a guiding document to direct future development in Baltimore County, there is a lot at stake. Growth affects so many aspects of our communities, such as housing, schools, infrastructure, recreational space, land conservation, environmental protection, neighborhood development and commercial development; all of these issues were included in the County's previous master plan.

You can be a part of the planning process. This spring begins the public engagement phase of the plan's creation, in which every Baltimore County citizen can give input that will guide the vision and strategies for the county during the next decade. Meetings for residents of different districts are as follows:

- [May 17, 6:30pm - Districts 1 and 4](#)
- [May 18, 6:30pm - Districts 2 and 3](#)
- [May 19, 6:30pm - Districts 5, 6 and 7](#)

In addition to public meetings, you can have your voice heard through a survey offered on the County's Master Plan website, <https://masterplan2030-bc-gis.hub.arcgis.com/>. On the website, you can also find interesting facts and statistics about Baltimore County, as well as a guide to zoning, adopted community plans, and the 2020 Master Plan. Be a part of the effort to help ensure the Baltimore County Master Plan reflects what is important in our communities.



Baltimore County Fair Election Fund Work Group



The LWVBCo is committed to supporting measures to make county government representative, efficient, effective and responsible. That's why we worked as part of a coalition to support the passing of a Charter Amendment to create a voluntary system of public financing for candidates in local elections, which was passed by Baltimore County voters during the 2020 general election. As the County Council strives to enact legislation to create a Fair Election Fund System for candidates running in the 2026 election cycle, we continue to be involved. Earlier this year, the Baltimore County Executive convened the Baltimore County Fair Election Fund Work Group, a bipartisan group of stakeholders tasked with making recommendations on the creation and implementation of this new public financing program. Our League is one of those stakeholders.

League member Sue Garonzik attended the first meeting of the Fair Election Fund Work Group and is passing the torch of representation to fellow League member, Phyllis Panopoulos. The work group, which is chaired by County Councilman Julian Jones, is tasked with making recommendations on the creation and implementation of this new public financing program. Some of the policy areas the group will consider include how candidates can participate in the system, how residents can donate to the Fund, what the limits and thresholds should be in regard to matching funds and qualified donors, and how disbursements will be made from the Fund to campaign committees.

We are excited to be a part of the process to ensure that the legislation for the Fair Election Fund System will incorporate best practices in equalizing access to the electoral process. The work group will issue its recommendations in a final report to the County Council at the end of September, and we will report on them to you. For more information, visit the Baltimore County Government's webpage on the Fair Election Fund Work Group, <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/boards-commissions/executive/fair-election-fund-work-group>.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

POLICE REFORM



The LWVMD were among hundreds of people and organizations who testified on the five police reforms backed by the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability (MCJPA) during the legislative session. The MCJPA, which is working for racial justice in policing in Maryland, includes over 90 organizations and puts survivors of police abuse at the front of the campaign for reform.

Some of the bills came up short, but the families and MCJPA refused to settle for symbolic changes and pushed for real reform. For the first time the Speaker of the House spoke up for police reform. The General Assembly passed reforms that will create transparency in the investigation of police misconduct, clearly define and limit use of force by law enforcement, and begin the process to transfer power of the police department back to the community. However, these reforms do not provide external community power to review and oversight of police misconduct, nor do they remove police officers from schools.

What was accomplished:

- **Passage of Anton's Law, SB 178** - amends the Maryland Public Information Act to allow public disclosure of records of police misconduct investigations. It will allow communities to know if police departments are appropriately handling complaints and punishing misconduct.
- **Passage of Use of Force statute** - raises the legal standard to authorize force when it is necessary and proportional, based on the totality of circumstances.

Key demands not met:

- **Community oversight into police misconduct** - while the Law Enforcement Bill of Rights (LEBOR) was repealed, it was not replaced with an external community based organization that has power to investigate, adjudicate, and impose discipline. While there is civilian participation in the disciplinary process, it is not the same as community oversight. Additionally, police chiefs still do not have responsibility for police discipline, which remains with trial boards.
- **Removal of police from schools** - the two bills introduced to remove School Resource Officers from schools and reallocate funding to critical services did not advance in the General Assembly.

- Ericka McDonald, Membership Chair

BALTIMORE COUNTY COUNCIL

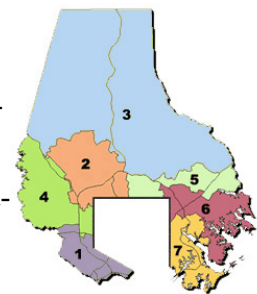
Our County Council Observer Corps followed several pieces of legislation considered by the Baltimore County Council; their status is as follows:

Resolution 16-21 Amendment, 10 Year Solid Waste Management Plan, was approved at the Feb 15 Legislative Session. This amendment will add office building recycling amendment to the Baltimore County solid waste management plan.

Bill 33-21, Government Reorganization – Department of Public Works and Transportation, passed at the County Council May 3 Legislative Session. This will be a consolidation of government offices/agencies and functions.

Bill 34-21, Department of Housing and Community Development, passed with amendments at the May 3 Legislative Session. Mr. Terry Hickey will be the director of this new agency. The agency will oversee evictions and foreclosure prevention, community revitalization and compli-

ance with a 2016 agreement that former County Executive Kevin Kamenetz reached with HUD (Housing and Urban Development Agency) to remedy decades of Baltimore County policies that promoted segregation in county housing.



Fiscal Matters: The county council approved expenditure of \$2.2 million in Open Space funds to acquire 24.5 acres from Villa Maria on the west side of Dulaney Valley Road in Lutherville. This land will be kept for recreational use.

Bill 11-21, County Charter – County Council – Term of Office, did not pass at the March 1 Legislative Session. This Bill would have set term limits of no more than three full four-year terms for county council members beginning in 2022.

- Betsy Sexton, Advocacy Chair

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

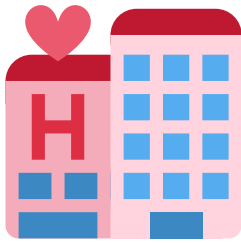
TRANSPORTATION

In statewide legislation, [HB 114, the Transit Safety and Investment Act](#), passed the House and Senate and sent to Governor Hogan on April 12, 2021. Hogan has thirty days to either sign it, veto it, or let it become law without his signature. The bi-partisan bill by Senators Cory McCray and Craig Zucker and Delegate Brooke Lierman will mandate minimum funding levels in MTA's six year capital budget to begin to close the \$2 billion gap in the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA's) maintenance backlog.

- Phyllis H. Panopoulos, Transportation Committee Chair



HEALTHCARE



There were several bills under consideration during the MD Legislative Session this year that the LWVBCo's Healthcare Committee followed and/or advocated for. We are glad to report that the following bills all passed both houses!

[HB 565 / SB 514, Medical Debt Protection](#). Maryland has in place financial assistance programs, regulations and laws that protect consumers from medical debt and medical debt collectors. Passed March 2021, by unanimous vote, HB 565/SB 514 are steps in protecting people from hospital debt collection practices. The compromised version of this bill bars hospitals or collection agencies from garnishing wages from people who qualify for free or reduced care. Hospitals would also be prohibited from seeking to have a lien placed on the primary home of any former patient who has an unpaid bill, regardless of income.

The measures further require that institutions offer former patients a payment plan, with a stipulation that payments not exceed 5% of a person's income. Hospitals must also document the steps they took to inform patients about payment plans and financial assistance. In addition, they need to ensure patients are aware of these programs, and they must post notices about these assistance programs in areas throughout the facility where they are visible to all patients. Finally, as per the Maryland law, a hospital can't sell outstanding medical debt to a medical collection agency.

A poll, commissioned by the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition, found that nearly four of every five people surveyed said hospitals should not be able to

garnish a person's wages to collect a debt for medically necessary care. From the same poll, one in six people said they had put off medical care due to cost concerns. COVID-19 brought into focus how devastating hospital medical bills can be to any family. This non-partisan bill is a step towards ensuring healthcare for all Maryland citizens.

[HB 123, Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021](#), passed the Maryland General Assembly on April 13, 2021 and was approved by Governor Hogan the same day. This bill requires the Maryland Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid) to provide telehealth to those citizens receiving Medicaid benefits. This bill also includes behavioral healthcare services via telehealth that may have been provided in person in the past. This ongoing access to telehealth benefits many citizens of Maryland with transportation problems, functional mobility deficits, medical issues, and much more.

[HB 28, Public Health - Implicit Bias Training and the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities](#), passed the Maryland General Assembly on April 8, 2021. This bill requires a Health Care Disparities Policy Report Card to be collected and published with data that includes race and ethnicity data and to update this data biannually. The annual budget, beginning in 2023, will include funding for this report. The funding will also require a program to identify and approve implicit bias training for all health care workers. In an effort to equalize healthcare access for all Maryland citizens, it is essential to identify issues surrounding healthcare issues in underserved communities and to assure that all healthcare workers provide the same quality of healthcare to all patients regardless of their race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation or presenting illness.

- Carol Wynne, Healthcare Chair

Visit the LWVMD Action Blog to find out the status of legislation related to Clean Energy, Housing, Education, Fiscal Policy, Government Transparency, Redistricting, and Voting. Go to www.lwvmd.org and click on their Action tab.

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