

LWV HOWARD COUNTY UPDATE

Now that the 2020 elections are behind us, we can all breathe a sigh of relief. Leading up to election day, your League was hard at work, registering voters and staying up to date on the ever-changing rules for voting. The League did the following:

Registered Voters – Cheryl Wharton spearheaded the effort to get people registered and asked them to make a commitment to vote.

Voter Education – We partnered with the Howard County Library system and other community groups to reach voters and educate them about the candidates and the issues. The Voters' Guide was provided in virtual form to the HCPSS Secondary Social Studies Department for use in classes.

Candidate Forum – The League partnered with the Association of Community Services of Howard County, the PTA Council of Howard County, and the Horizon Foundation to host a candidates forum over Zoom.

The Voters' Guide – Barbara Russell worked tirelessly to pull together the League's Voters' Guide. We were able to print and deliver these to the libraries, grocery stores, and several senior centers; plus, we posted it as a PDF on our website and Facebook page. Vote411.org was updated with this information.

The Election - Several League members worked as election judges and monitors. Thank You!

Our League received a wonderful surprise in the 4th quarter of 2020. Long-standing LWVHC member, Margo Garner, left the League a generous benefit in her will, which is deeply appreciated.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2021

February 11, March 11

The board meets virtually, the 2nd Thursday of every month

January 30

*LWVMD Winter Workshop \$5.00,
9:30am-12:30pm*

https://www.lwvmd.org/winter_workshop_2021

February 18

*LWVHC Unit Meeting – Education
Study (from 2020), 7pm
Check your emails for more
information*

March 18

*LWVHC Unit Meeting – 7pm
Check your email for more
information*

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.





CONSENSUS ON VOTE-BY-MAIL

The Montgomery County League recommended a study on vote by mail in June 2019, noting that Rockville planned to use this method in its November 2019 election. A study committee began work in the Fall, but by Spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had made the subject more pressing. At its June 2020 Council Meeting, the LWV of Maryland (LWVMD) determined that a state-wide study should be done instead, to be completed in time to have a consensus position in place for the start of the Maryland legislative session in 2021.

This goal was achieved!

On December 30, 2020, the LWVMD announced a Consensus position had been reached, as follows:

Support for Vote by Mail (VBM) for elections in Maryland where all registered voters are automatically sent a ballot in the mail without having to request one first, and in-person voting options are available but limited.

The following best practices should be applied to any VBM legislation:

1. Prepaid postage for return of ballots should be required.
2. Ballots should be mailed at least three weeks before an election.
3. Voter Education using all forms of media is essential in preparing voters for the vote by mail process.
4. Ballots should be tracked throughout the process by means such as the use of barcodes.
5. Some form of signature privacy should be made available for returning ballots.
6. Ample drop boxes must be available in all counties and Baltimore City and they must be conveniently located, especially with public transportation access and/or access to rural areas when appropriate. Safety must also be provided for the ballots and the voters.
7. Ample in-person polling places must be available in all counties and Baltimore City and they must be conveniently located, especially with public transportation access and/or access to rural areas when appropriate. Safety must also be provided for the ballots and the voters.
8. Vote counting should start before Election Day.
9. If a signature is missing or required, the voter should have a chance to correct the challenge.
10. Early opportunities for in-person voting should be continued

ABOUT US

Officers

President: Cynthia Williams
Vice President: Krista Threefoot
Secretary: Virginia Kirk
Treasurer: Barbara Russell

Directors

Action: Linda Wengel
Communications: Laura Mettle
Education: Linda Frascarella
Environment: Sandra Levey
Fundraising: Michelle Rice Trotter
Membership: Lucie Geinzer
Programs: Krista Threefoot
Publications: Amber Treat
Voter Services: Cheryl Wharton

Contact Us

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<https://www.facebook.com/LWVHC>



WHAT IS CONSENSUS?

As a volunteer, non-profit organization, the League of Women Voters' uses consensus to come to agreement.

"Consensus/group discussion is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The 'consensus' reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall 'sense of the group' as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions."

To learn more: https://www.lwvmd.org/what_is_consensus

ENVIRONMENT

By Sandra Levey

Two bills sponsored by Senator Katie Fry Hester bear watching in the Maryland Legislature. SB62-Chief Resilience Officer which creates a Chief Resilience Officer within the Maryland Emergency Management Administration to mitigate the effects of climate change on vulnerable communities, and SB319- Clean Energy Loan Program which opens access to low interest loans for environmental remediation and clean energy improvements for commercial properties.

To learn more about bills and actions affecting the environment, please check out the director's reports on our website!

HOUSING TASK FORCE

by Linda Wengel

I have had the privilege of serving on the Housing Opportunities Task Force since last Fall and we hope to complete our work by June of this year (2021). A master plan for housing needs has not been completed for Howard County in more than 10 years. County Executive Ball created the Housing Opportunities Master Plan Task Force in the Fall of 2019 to assess the current state of housing in Howard County and to assist in the preparation of the Housing Opportunities Master Plan. The Housing Opportunities Master Plan is assessing housing programs and policies in all County government departments and agencies to improve efficiency and effectiveness, identify ways to create and preserve housing opportunities for residents of all income levels, and provide metrics and timelines to measure progress towards achieving goals in the plan. The Housing Master Plan will be integrated into the new twenty-year General Plan for Howard County which is now in the development process.



RACIAL EQUITY TASK FORCE

by Laura Mettle

Beth Hufnagel and I are both on the Howard County Council Racial Equity Task Force. The Task Force has six committees:

- 1) Economic and Workforce Development
- 2) Education
- 3) Public Health and Environmental Policy
- 4) Land-Use and Housing Policy
- 5) Legislative Process (this is the committee on which we both serve)
- 6) Personal and Public Safety

The task force is charged with recommending legislation to the County Council to address racial disparities and inequities in Howard County. We are to identify and evaluate actions that the County Council can pursue to advance racial equity in Howard County, including:

- reviewing indicators of disparate outcomes and findings of applicable studies, best practices, and local data to ascertain pertinent information on issues related to racial equity and identifying metrics for measuring progress
- identifying new County policies and changes to ordinances and policies that could improve racial equity
- recommending legislation to the County Council to improve racial equity
- recommending actions that other County entities in receipt of County funds can take that will improve racial equity outcomes

Currently the task force is in the “Discovery and Learning” phase, during which a virtual public hearing will occur, and public testimony will be accepted and reviewed. Following a period of study and consideration, the goal is for a final report of recommendations to be completed in the Summer of 2021.

To learn more: <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/About-Us/Commissions-Task-Forces-and-Special-Reports/Racial-Equity-Task-Force>

Annual Legislative Breakfast, January 16, 2021

If you missed our Virtual Legislative Breakfast, the full video may be found on our [Facebook](#) page

<https://www.facebook.com/LWVHC>,

or on our Website at

https://hoco.lwvhowardmd.org/live_forum_videos



THE STATE LEAGUE'S POSITIONS

In February, at the Unit Meeting, we reviewed the state league's positions on a variety of topics. Those attending recommended action on the Education positions, especially in the area of Equity in Education. Please review the current LWVMD positions which can be found on their website: <https://www.lwvmd.org/positions>. National LWVUS reissued their program document, *Impact on Issues*, in 2020, which may be found at <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>.

The league holds positions on a variety of topics. Here is an example of one of those positions:

Drug and Controlled Substance Abuse

Action to legalize the use of marijuana for any use, including medicinal, subject to restrictions on production and distribution. (2012)

Support for:

Legalization of marijuana for any use, including medicinal use, subject to restrictions on production and distribution. No agreement was reached as to the legalization of other non-prescription illegal drugs classified as controlled substances such as heroin or cocaine for medicinal or any use.

Background: The study of Drug and Controlled Substances Abuse, Policies and Laws in Maryland was adopted at the 2009 LWVMD Convention and readopted at the LWVMD 2011 Convention. The study was undertaken to afford LWVMD positions that could be used to address proposed legislation on drug abuse and controlled substances, especially marijuana.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

To Volunteer, please contact the league via email
info@howard.lwvmd.org

WEBSITE UNDER CONSTRUCTION ...

If you have expertise in website construction or design, we could use your help. We are trying to better organize our documents and make it easier for our members to access links to meetings and events. This would be a one-time project that we hope to kick-off in early February.

NEWSLETTER ...

If you are comfortable with word processing software and would like to assemble this newsletter, we could use your help. You do not have to write articles, although you are welcome to do so. This would be a monthly task.

MEMBERSHIP

Keep your eyes open for an email about our new membership campaign "Recruit One Person"
As of January 9, 2021, we have 121 members and we look forward to increasing membership to help us as we continue to work for democracy.