

Electoral Systems and LWVUS Concurrence

With elections this fall and next year's Presidential primaries in full swing, we are looking at ways to improve our voting system. This month's study considers some options, and should lead to vigorous discussions. Meanwhile, please encourage friends, family, neighbors to attend a candidate forum this month and visit Vote411 for information on this November's local ballot.

Calendar

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

- 3 Springfield Dist. Candidate Forum, 7pm
- 4 LWNCA Board Meeting, 10:30 am
- 5 Voter Registration Drive at Taste of Annandale, 10 am
- 5 LWVFA At-Large Meeting, 10 am
- 5 Braddock Dist. Candidate Forum, 3:30 pm
- 7 *Fairfax Voter* Deadline for Nov. issue
- 9-10 LWVFA Unit Meetings
- 13 Hunter Mill Dist. Candidate Forum, 3 pm
- 15 Voter Registration Deadline for November 5 General Election
- 16 LWVFA Board Meeting, 10 am
- 16 Providence Dist. Candidate Forum, 7 pm
- 16 Lee Dist. Candidate Forum 7 pm
- 17 Dranesville Dist. Candidate Forum, 7 pm
- 17 Mason Dist. Candidate Forum, 7 pm
- 23 Sully Dist. Candidate Forum, 7:30 pm

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Presidents' Message



Happy October!

It has been a busy September as we get ready for Elections and there are many programs being planned or already underway!

The first of our many candidate forums were successfully completed already and there are several additional ones lined up for this month. High school voter registration is in full swing. The new “What’s on the Ballot” has been printed and is being distributed. We have also completed the first in a series of four highly-anticipated voter education brochures. This series will use plain language to explain the offices we will be voting to fill in November. What do the people in these positions do? Who can run to fill them and for how long do they serve? This information, along with a glossary of election terms, will help give voters the confidence and encouragement they need to turn out to vote!

And that is only some of what the LWVFA is currently working on! As you can imagine, we need a lot of resources to make all of the above happen – both human and financial.

To that end, we would love for each member to volunteer a little bit (or a lot if you can) of your time. There is no better feeling than getting involved. Support an issue or an event that is important to you and make a difference in your community! The opportunities range from small to big and there are both longer-term projects and ones that require only a couple of hours. No skills necessary – just a willingness to pitch in! You can see all the events on the website and use the SignUp Genius link to put your name down for it. So come and join your fellow Leaguers – meet people, make friends, be a part!

Along with your volunteering effort we do need funds to help finance our activities. Yes, your annual dues are an important piece of what allows the League to operate on both a local, regional, state and national level. But, they defray only a very small portion of what we actually strive to do in our community. Financial support and fundraising is a critical requirement in order for us to maintain and expand our activities in the coming months.

We understand that fundraising and asking for donations can be awkward. And, many of us are very shy when it comes to asking for money even if it is for such a worthwhile cause. We know you believe in what the LWVFA is doing and we are here to offer help and some suggestions for how to best reach out to friends, family, neighbors and businesses.

Think of why you joined the League: What makes us such an amazing and effective powerhouse in activism and education? With that in mind, here are some answers to some of the common questions you may get. The first one is invariably, why? Why should we give to the League? What makes the League so special? To that we say the following:

We are the largest volunteer-driven voter registration organization in America.

We are the strongest grassroots organization working on voting rights.

We have been around for almost a hundred years!

We have a track record of litigation in cases against gerrymandering and voting rights. A large number of

*Fairfax County 24-hr.
Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline:
703-360-7273; 711 TTY*

Fairfax VOTER 2019 - 2020

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amicus briefs have been filed by the League relating to campaign finance reform issues, racial bias in jury selection and Title IX.

We have good governance at every level of the organization.

Our members are well informed and passionate and can talk confidently on any or all of the topics that are dear to us like voting rights, gerrymandering, ERA and climate change.

In other words – the League of Women Voters makes a difference in our communities! We educate! We act! We get things done!

So please, spread the word. People are looking for a way to support the issues that are important to them or to make changes they feel are needed. Give them the opportunity to do so. Give them the opportunity to make a philanthropic donation to one of the most effective and most time-tested nonpartisan nonprofits out there. Give to the League! And, while you are discussing what we as a community can do for

ourselves and others, ask that they consider joining with us as members! The stronger we become – the more we can help.

Another thing that you, our invaluable members, should do over the coming months is talk about the importance of the Census. As you might be aware the League has taken that on as a priority at all levels. The Fairfax League is working with Fairfax County on the Complete Count Committee in order to ensure that every single resident gets counted. For every resident that does not get counted, the County loses \$2000 per year of federal funds. Over ten years that is \$20,000! SO whenever you meet people, raise the subject of the Census. There are some demographics that historically get undercounted and those are the ones we need to reach. They are usually new immigrants, children under five and minorities.

Like we said, it is going to be a busy time and we hope to see you out there at the candidate forums and other events!

Anu & Nancy

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month:

What Should You Know? Why Should You Care?

By Barbara Nunes and Adarsh Trehan

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. “Domestic violence or IPV is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship.” (Source: The National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH)). IPV stands for intimate partner violence. The abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological, and/or financial or a combination of these. Sometimes, there are physical injuries resulting from abuse but many times there are not.

How serious is domestic violence as a public health problem?

In 2013, Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization stated “...violence against women is a global health problem of epidemic proportions. We also see that the world’s health systems can and must do more for women who experience violence.” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) “Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious, preventable public health problem that affects millions of Americans. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.” Unfortunately, it is rarely discussed, because people consider it a private matter

that occurs behind closed doors. Also, a relative, friend or neighbor could be a victim but not talk about it because of a feeling of shame or guilt or because he/she feels that there is a stigma attached to it!

“On average, 24 people a minute are victims of rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States - more than 12 million women and men in the course of a year.” (In addition), “. . . more than 1 in 3 women and more than 1 in 7 men age 18 years or older have been victims of severe physical (abuse) or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.” (Source: NDVH)

Domestic violence can even cause death! For surviving victims, personal health problems such as physical injuries and ailments can cause acute suffering. “They are at a higher risk for engaging in health risk behaviors such as smoking, binge drinking, and HIV risk behaviors.” There can also be emotional damage, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder for surviving victims. In addition to the personal physical and emotional suffering, there are economic costs to society as well. “The lifetime economic cost associated with medical services for IPV-related injuries, lost productivity from paid work, criminal justice and other costs, such as victim property loss or damage was \$3.6 trillion (2014 US dollars). The lifetime per-victim cost

was \$103,767 for women and \$23,414 for men.” (Source: CDC). We can all agree that those large sums of money could be much better used for societal benefits.

There is a new book on domestic violence, No Visible Bruises: What We Don’t Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us, by Rachel Louise Snyder. You can read it and gain a better understanding of this very disturbing crime.

What can you do?

If a relative, friend, or neighbor confides in you about such behavior, encourage him or her to call the Fairfax County Domestic and Sexual Services Hotline Violence

at (703) 360-7273 TTY 711. If you suspect a person is suffering from such abuse, you can also call the Hotline yourself and report it. The County provides community victim advocates, system-based advocates, and other service providers who offer a safe environment where victims can feel comfortable exploring their options and accessing the services and resources they may need. All services are free and, when possible, confidential.

Contact: Barbara Nunes Bnunes7007@gmail.com or Adarsh Trehan, adatrehan@gmail.com

Enviromental Update . . .

By Elizabeth Lonoff



Waterkeepers’ Work Boat - Sea Dog

Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks and James Riverkeeper Jamie Brunkow received the Waterkeeper Outstanding Win (WOW!) Award from their colleagues at Waterkeepers Chesapeake in September. In 2015, Dean discovered that the unlined coal ash pits at Possum Point were leaching carcinogens into the Potomac River. He then organized an effort to protect public health by testing the drinking water wells of nearby communities for heavy metals. Dean and Jamie worked with local communities and in the courts with legislators, citizens, and other advocates to find a common sense solution. As a result, the bipartisan Virginia Safe Disposal of Coal Ash was enacted this year to mandate the safe disposal of the 28 million tons of coal ash Dominion Energy now has stored along the banks of the Potomac. This law sets a national precedent for how to safely close coal combustion impoundments. See Dean - and the newly-donated Sea Dog - at work along the Potomac in Alexandria at <<https://www.voanews.com/episode/floating-laboratory-monitors-potomac-river-water-quality-4014571>>.

IN MEMORIAM: Margaret “Peg” Honour

By Mary Nightlinger

This was a sad summer for the Springfield Unit. Peg Honour, our more than 50-year-long League friend and colleague, died on June 29, 2019. Peg was 94.

Peg grew up in California and was a graduate of Stanford University. She used to say that Stanford wasn’t so special back then. Peg, however, was special. She moved to northern Virginia in the late 1960s and continued her work as a social worker whose professional life included managing the care of orphan children, AIDS sufferers, and homeless people.

She will be missed by her fellow League members, those who knew her at Greenspring Village, and especially her friends in the Springfield Unit.



Electoral Systems and LWVUS Concurrence

By Dianne Blais, Karole McKalip, Julie Jones, and Beth Tudan

The United States, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s 2018 Democracy Index, is a “flawed democracy” ranking 25th out of 167 countries.

The Electoral Integrity Project (EIP) rates electoral integrity worldwide. The United States is 56th among 167 countries. This is the worst rating among all Western democracies.

The Pew Research Center states: “The 55.7% voting-age population, or turnout in 2016 puts the U.S. behind most of its peers in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Looking at the most recent nationwide election in each OECD nation, the U.S. placed 26th out of 32.”

A LWVFA study group was formed to explore elections, electoral systems, and Rank Choice Voting (RCV). While working on the study, LWVUS announced their recommended concurrence on the electoral process. We decided to use the LWVUS concurrence material as the basis for our discussion. The Concurrence information is at: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/proposed-concurrence-electoral-systems>

LWVUS CONCURRENCE

Concurrence on Voter Representation / Election Process (Electoral Systems)

Position in Brief:

Support election methods at each level of government that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable and enhance representation for all voters.”

Position in Full:

The LWV promotes an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive. We encourage election methods that provide the broadest voter representation possible, have a positive effect on voter participation, and are expressive of voter choices.

Whether for single or multiple winner contests, the League supports election methods that:

- Encourage voter participation and voter engagement
- Encourage those with minority opinions to participate, including under-represented communities
- Are verifiable and auditable
- Promote access to voting
- Promote competitive elections
- Maximize effective votes/minimize “wasted” votes
- Promote sincere voting over strategic voting
- Discourage negative campaigning
- Encourage meaningful discussion of issues
- Require the winner to receive a majority of the votes for executive and other single seat offices
- Are compatible with acceptable ballot-casting methods, including vote-by-mail.

The LWVUS believes in representative government. The League supports electoral systems that elect policy-making bodies—legislatures, councils, commissions, and boards—that proportionally reflect the people they represent. We support systems that inhibit political manipulation (e.g., gerrymandering).

The LWVUS supports enabling legislation to allow local jurisdictions to explore alternative electoral methods as well as supporting state election laws allowing for more options at both the state and local levels. With the adoption of any electoral system, the League believes that education of the voting public is important and funding for startup and voter education should be available. We encourage a concerted voter education process.

Background

We take pride in our name, The League of Women Voters, and our work as a multi-issue organization over the last century. The LWV has positions on a multitude of public policy issues decided by our elected representatives, however, we do not have a position on how we elect the representatives that make those public policy decisions.

Our plurality system came with the British and it has limits when it comes to “Making Democracy Work.” Just one example: a voter’s choice can help elect their least favorite candidate due to vote splitting. Potential good candidates often choose not to run because they don’t want to be a “spoiler candidate.” Unsatisfied with the limits of the plurality system and its impact on representation, 14 state Leagues as well as many local Leagues have undertaken

studies and developed positions supporting alternatives to the plurality system, which is also known as “first past the post” originating in the late 1800s.

As opposed to plurality, sophisticated options used in some cities around the country (like Cambridge, MA, where it has been used for over 50 years for City Council and school boards) have saved taxpayers and candidates money. They have reduced negative campaigning, achieved majority winners while preventing vote splitting among similar candidates, minimized “wasted” votes and provided more voters a meaningful voice. Additionally, they have helped elect women and candidates more representative of their communities.

Leagues that did studies and consensus discovered no electoral method is perfect. However, some are better than others at representing voters and creating more opportunities for women and under-represented voters. These Leagues recommended election methods as a result of their studies as well as criterion for evaluating a method and best practices.

This position does NOT support any particular election method but rather supports the LWV goals for “an open, governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.” It allows for Leagues to use the position to evaluate or propose electoral options. In many jurisdictions, options are needed as remedies to voting rights lawsuits that seek minority representation.

Why Adopt the Position?

This position provides us a clear, but flexible, base of principles to explore election method reforms and take action when appropriate for voters. Across the nation, cities in various states have adopted new election methods, including Minnesota, California, Washington, Texas, North Dakota, Illinois, New York and many others. Also included are new methods used for statewide office and Congressional contests in Maine. Most major newspapers have editorialized in support of electoral options to improve representation and reduce voter apathy. They recognize that democracy depends on it.

Our Process

This position is a compilation of positions adopted by AZ, CA, FL, MA, ME, MN, NC, OK, OR, PA, SC, VT, and WA, and established LWVUS principles on representation. While this is not an exhaustive list of state & local leagues that have conducted related studies, these states were instrumental in the formulation of the concurrence position.

How can the League use this Position in the Future?

- The National League could use this position to support or oppose federal legislation.
- A State League can use it to support or oppose state legislation.
- •Local Leagues can use it to propose or evaluate an electoral system proposed in their community.
- •Local Leagues can propose or support a suitable election method as a remedy to voting rights lawsuits that are filed when a protected group is under-represented by the current system.

Basis

The League of Women Voters United States does not have a position on how we elect our representatives. Yet, how we elect our leaders has a direct effect on representation of voters and “Making Democracy Work”.

- Our Mission, our Principles [“We believe in Representative Government”] and our trademark “Making Democracy Work” all speak to empowering voters through representation.
- When voters are denied representation because of where they live, the way district lines are drawn, or because they are an ethnic or political minority, apathy shouldn’t be a surprise.
- The electoral systems we use can enhance or deny representation of voters, just as
- how and who draws district lines can do the same.
- The purpose of having this position is to provide a clear but flexible base of principles (from 15 State League positions) for evaluating electoral systems that empower voters.
- This position is based on criterion (not ballot systems) to consider when evaluating electoral options that meet the needs of a community and the voters.
- This position does not require League action. Like many of our positions, it is there when we need it. For instance, many California communities are looking at options to plurality voting as a result of California Voting Right Act violations. For them, this concurrence is very timely. There may be a different scenario in your state, but one in which this concurrence would apply.

Terminology (in alpha order)

Electoral systems are tied to representation of voters, so we are providing some basic information on electoral terminology. The goal is not to debate systems, but to adopt a position which includes criterion for evaluating the best electoral systems for enhancing voter representation.

At-Large - A type of electoral jurisdiction where representatives are elected from the whole political region. Voters are not divided into districts. Common in cities and counties. Plurality/Winner-Take-All at-large systems allow 51 percent of voters to control 100 percent of seats.

Auditable - Transparent procedures to verify (either by hand count or technology) the accuracy of an election outcome.

Delayed Runoff – see Two-round Runoff.

Effective Vote - Opposite of “wasted votes” (see elsewhere). Effective votes are those that were useful in successfully electing (or in determining) a winner.

Electoral System - Rules and procedures governing the election of public officials by specifying ballot structure, district magnitude, and the way that votes are translated into seats.

First-Past-The-Post (FPTP), Same as Plurality Voting - In a horse race, the first horse to pass the finish line (the post) wins. The same is true for a FPTP electoral, a system that came with the British, which we still use and call Plurality voting. In an election, candidate with the most votes wins. However, the candidate may not have received a majority if more than 2 candidates in the race, due to vote-splitting. Vote splitting can result in electing the candidate least preferred by voters.

Gerrymandering - Different from “apportionment” which is the allotment of representatives based on an area’s population. Gerrymandering is a political manipulation. Specifically, “gerrymandering” is the manipulation of boundary lines in a district with the intent to advantage or disadvantage a candidate or political party in order to gain more seats than its proportion of the vote. Gerrymandering can be used to disenfranchise a group of voters by racial gerrymandering or disenfranchise members of the opposite party by partisan gerrymandering. [Redistricting is the term used for fair ‘line drawing,’ the goal of an Independent Redistricting Commission.]

Multi-Member District - An area (electoral jurisdiction) from which more than one candidate is elected.

Plurality - The most common electoral system in the U.S. in which the candidate with the most votes wins, without necessarily receiving a majority of votes. At times, it is coupled with a second, runoff election if a jurisdiction has required that the final winner receives a majority

vote. (See above “First Past the Post”). In a multi-winner election, i.e., City Council (not divided into districts) the plurality winners are the candidates that receive the most votes. (See “winner-take-all” below.)

Proportional Result - 40% of the vote gets 40% of the seats (representation) in a legislative body...not zero. 60% of the vote gets 60% of the seats (representation) in a legislative body...not 100% (i.e. Cambridge, MA City Council and School Board proportionally reflect the voters in the community). (Compare this to Winner-Take-All below.)

[While this proposed concurrence does not oppose or support any one system, this system is being explained for its more common use.]

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) aka Instant Runoff and Preference Voting - Voters are able to rank candidates by preference indicating a “back-up” candidate if their first choice does not have enough support to get elected. They don’t have to go back for a second election to accomplish the same.

RCV can be used to achieve a majority single winner without a second election (known as “Instant Runoff”). Examples of places where RCV is now used include St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN; Santa Fe, NM; Carbondale, Basalt and Telluride, CO; Takoma Park, MD; San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and San Lorenzo, CA; and the state of Maine for federal offices).

RCV can also be used to elect multi-winners to achieve a proportional result, (ie., 40% of the voters get 40% of the seats) in a legislative body. (Cambridge, MA City Council and School Board for over 50 years, and recently, East-Pointe, Michigan).

Sincere Voting - A term used when a voter chooses to cast her ballot for her most preferred candidate despite the candidate’s chances to win. [This is the opposite of “strategic” voting described elsewhere.] In electoral systems that encourage sincere voting, the voter can vote for a preferred candidate and not worry about “wasting” their vote.

Single Member District - An area (electoral jurisdiction) from which only one candidate is elected.

Spoiler Effect or “Spoiler Candidate” - Generally derogatory terms used to describe the phenomenon in which candidates split the vote. The terms can also apply to same-party candidate in relationship to weaker and stronger support. The most well-known examples of a candidate being labeled a ‘spoiler’ were during the 1992 election when

Ross Perot split the vote with George Bush, Sr. and helped elect Bill Clinton with 43% of the vote, and in 2000 when Ralph Nader split the vote with Al Gore helping to elect George W. Bush. Those votes for Ross Perot and Ralph Nader are considered “wasted votes” (see wasted votes).

Strategic Voting (aka Tactical Voting) - A voter chooses to vote for a candidate other than her ‘sincere’ choice. This is done in hopes of preventing a less-than-desirable outcome. This is most common when, despite the fact that the voter may prefer an independent, third party or weaker candidate, she believes she would be ‘throwing her vote away’ and instead votes for a candidate presumed to have a greater chance of victory.

Because the spoiler effect (see elsewhere) still sways decisions in the Primary round under Top Two systems (such as used in Washington, California and Louisiana), there is encouragement for voters to vote tactically (instead of sincerely). They need to choose the candidate they believe is most likely to advance to, or win, the general election, as opposed to voting for their most preferred candidate. They may also decide to vote for the opposite party candidate they would most like to see run against their preferred candidate.

Two Round Runoff - This is an election type used in a winner-take-all (WTA) system, in which a ‘delayed’ or second election is held if no candidate achieves a majority of votes in the first election (or first round). Common in many areas (states, cities, counties), this is sometimes referred to simply as “runoff elections”. Runoff elections ask voters to go back to the polls to ensure a majority (if required) in the second election. A second election often costs candidates and taxpayers more money, encourages negative campaigning, and in many cases, fewer voters participate.

Vote Splitting - When more than 2 candidates are on the ballot, voters can split their votes among like-minded candidates and it can help elect a least-favored candidate. This can also cause good, like-minded candidates NOT to run for office for fear of splitting the vote. This reduces voter’s choices, especially when parties encourage people not to run. Some alternatives to plurality voting address this problem. (See “Strategic Voting “and “Spoiler Effect”.)

Verifiable - A system (such as a paper ballot) that provides a secondary confirmation that equipment has correctly counted a voter’s ballot.

Wasted Vote - A political science term that refers to votes

that were NOT useful in the election of the winner. More often this means all ballots cast for a losing candidate (or candidates), but can also mean any extra (not needed) votes cast in support of a much-liked winner. If a voter does not vote for a ‘viable’ candidate in most plurality elections, then their vote is “wasted”. It doesn’t count toward electing a winner. Some alternative electoral systems address this problem.

WTA (Winner-Take-All) - “Winner-take-all” (WTA) is a term used to describe “single member district” and “at large” electoral systems (listed above) that award seats to the highest vote getters without ensuring fair representation for minority groups. Under winner-take-all rules, a slim majority of voters can control 100% of seats, leaving everyone else effectively without representation. The result is under-representation of women, communities of color, third parties, young people, and voters stuck in areas where their voice/representation is diminished when they have no seat at the table.

Since many areas are dominated by a single political viewpoint, in partisan elections, winner-take-all voting systems will often result in no-choice elections in which one party has a permanent monopoly on power, and the winner is effectively predetermined. Nearly every emerging democracy has rejected WTA use. Winner-take-all systems, introduced to America by the British during the colonial era, are virtually unknown in other developed countries.

Pro/Con Arguments

After 100 years, it is a good time for the League of Women Voters to have a position on Voter Representation. / After 100 years, the LWV doesn’t need a position on Voter Representation.

This proposed concurrence provides a clear but flexible base of preferred principles (from 15 state positions) for evaluating electoral options to enhance voter representation. / The numerous criteria included are very broad, and, as an entire group, not easily achieved.

This position does not support one particular electoral system. It allows options for local jurisdictions. / This position doesn’t specifically name or support a best electoral system, which could be helpful to members.

Along with representation, it makes sense for the League of Women VOTERS to have a position on how we VOTE for our leaders. / As with representation, the LWV doesn’t need a position on HOW we elect our leaders, we have functioned without it for 100 years.

The LWV does not have a position that supports or opposes ANY electoral system. Electoral options are needed to improve voter representation. / While the LWV does not have a position on the current winner-take-all plurality system, it is familiar to voters.

Position is in line with LWV mission & principles on representative government. How we elect our leaders has a direct effect on voter representation. / Position introduces too many issues for one position.

This position recognizes that the electoral systems we use can enhance or deny representation just as much as who draws district lines, and how they are drawn. With this position, both issues are addressed. / Redistricting reform with independent redistricting commissions drawing the lines will help voters be represented.

QUESTION - DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS CONCURRENCE?

Voting

Through voting, citizens may formally express their preferences for candidates for office or for proposed issues. Voting systems constitute the procedures by which we cast our votes to elect public officials are a crucial part of the democratic election process. (American Heritage Dictionary)

“Technology has modernized voting and ballot counting over the years. Early voters used (paper ballots placed in) wooden ballot boxes. Later, people began using punch cards and curtained-off mechanical voting machines. Modern methods include touch-screens and optical scan ballots. Modern voting methods have for the most part eliminated vote-count by hand. But in some very close races, recounts are still performed manually.” (www.usa.gov/election-results)

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) established a new federal agency to provide funds to states to replace outdated voting systems, to establish the Election Assistance Commission to assist in the administration of Federal elections and to otherwise provide assistance with the administration of certain Federal election laws and programs. It helped create minimum administration standards of elections for states and units of local government with responsibility for the administration of Federal elections and for other purposes. (www.justice.gov/crt/help-america-vote-act-2002)

Ways of Voting

Punch Cards - Punch cards were once a popular voting method, but they were criticized after the 2000 election and have been phased out. They are no longer in use today. Voters would place the punch cards onto a clipboard device then use a stylus to poke holes into perforated squares (chads) that corresponded to the candidate for whom they were voting.

Mechanical lever machines - These machines were completely phased out by 2010 as a part of HAVA. Voters who used these machines would walk up to a machine and a curtain would close behind them. They would then select their chosen candidates by turning small levers that corresponded to those candidates. They would then pull a larger lever to cast their votes and open the curtain.

Hand-counted paper ballot - This type of voting system requires a paper and pen. Voters mark the preferred candidate on a paper ballot, which is given to an election official to be manually counted. There are security concerns for these hand-counted ballots.

Paper ballot with optical scan - The optical scan allows voters to fill in a sheet by hand, but then it is tallied using a machine. Voters mark their votes by filling in oval, box, or similar shape on a paper ballot. Later, the paper ballots are scanned either at the polling place or at a central location.

Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machines -- Using these machines, voters cast their votes with either a touchscreen, button, or dial. Votes are immediately cast into an electronic storage medium. This system makes both casting and counting votes easier. Initially, there was no way to verify the accuracy of the results. The DREs are now able to print a piece of paper to allow voters to verify their votes. The records are available for an audit or recount.

Ballot-marking Devices and Systems - The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and HAVA in 2002 helped to standardize expectations for voting machines for people with disabilities. These machines specifically give voters more options for physically marking their ballots. Once marked, the ballots are typically tabulated elsewhere. Many of these machines provide different ways for voters to mark their ballots. Voters can access the ballot with either a screen or an audio recording.

Online voting - Electronic voting occurs when voters cast their ballots through a digital system instead of on paper. Until the beginning of the 21st century, electronic voting

did not exist. However, electronic voting has become more popular despite concerns around auditing and transparency. (www.techopedia.com)

Postal Voting - The way Americans vote is changing. More and more people are receiving and casting their ballots by mail. The number of people voting by mail has doubled since 2000. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 10 percent of all ballots cast in the 2000 presidential election were by mail. In 2012, 19 percent of voters cast a ballot by mail. In the 2014 midterms, data from the Survey of the Performance of American Elections found that around a quarter of all voters voted by mail. (<https://votingbymail.org/>) Oregon, Washington, Utah, and Colorado have moved to replace their polling place systems entirely with voting by mail.

Absentee Voting - Absentee ballots are submitted, often by mail, in advance of an election, and often by voters who are unable to be present at the polls on election day. This excludes ballots sent to overseas civilian and military voters that are covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986.

Summary

As of November 2018 the methods of voting in the states and D.C. were:

- Paper Ballot-18
- Paper and DRE with a paper trail-18
- Paper and DRE without a paper trail-8
- DRE without a paper trail-3
- Mail-4

Rank Choice Voting (RCV)

RCV is defined in the Terminology section of the U.S. concurrence. RCV has been around a long time - Tasmania has enjoyed the benefit of RCV for over 100 years. The Background section of the concurrence noted “*sophisticated options used in some cities around the country (like Cambridge, MA, where it has been used for over 50 years for city council and school boards) have saved taxpayers and candidates money.*” The sophisticated option used in Cambridge is RCV. Cambridge uses no wards or districts, and regularly elects historically underrepresented candidates to positions on its city council.

In the U.S., cities in 21 states have adopted a ranked-choice voting system in some form, and numerous cities plan to implement it. It will be used in numerous state primaries and caucuses. Every voter in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Malta, Northern Ireland, and Scotland uses it.

Fair representation is the principle that a legislature should reflect all of the voters who elect them. Like-minded voters should be able to elect representatives in proportion to their number. The **Fair Representation Act** (Introduced in the 115th Congress as [HR 3057](#)) gives voters of all backgrounds and all political stripes the power to elect House Members who reflect their views and will work constructively with others in Congress. Under the Fair Representation Act, there will be more choices and **several winners elected in each district**. Congress will remain the same size, but districts will be larger, each electing 3, 4, or 5 winners. **Voters will be free to rank their choices without fear of “spoilers.”** No district will be “red” or “blue.” Every district will fairly reflect the spectrum of voters.

The most recognized type of Fair Representation is Proportional Representation. Steven Mulroy, author of “**Rethinking US Election Law: Unskewing the System,**” states that only by adopting Proportional Representation can the U.S. overcome electoral challenges like gerrymandering.

FairVote, a major proponent of RCV, is located in Tacoma Park, MD, but has offices throughout the U.S. Its web-site is a wealth of information about RCV. It notes the three bills that were introduced in the last General Assembly session in Richmond to allow RCV in city councils, etc., did not advance.

The use of winner-take-all voting methods in our elections for state legislatures and Congress is a central reason for major problems with our politics: gerrymandering, partisan gridlock, no-choice elections and distortions in fair representation all have roots in the inherent problems of winner-take-all methods. The use of RCV would be a major step in correcting these problems.

Sources:

- www.electionlab.mit.edu/research/voting-technology
- https://ballotpedia.org/Voting_methods_and_equipment_by_state
- www.businessinsider.com/voting-machines-types
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turnout-trails-most-developed-countries/
<https://fairvote.org>
<https://fortune.com/2019/05/07/ranked-choice-voting-explained>
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2019/03/20/adopting-proportional-representation-would-uns skew-us-elections/>

Discussion Questions

1. Our country's elections need improvement – is RCV the answer?
 2. Do you think RCV should be allowed/used in Va.? (LWVME studied RCV for years and were instrumental in bringing it to Maine. “*The Battle for Ranked Choice Voting*” is a documentary about the effort in Maine.)
 3. Are you willing to give up Single Member Districts to have Fair Representation?
 4. Do you have additional questions?
-

LWVFA Donors and Supporters

The LWVFA Board extends an overwhelming thank you to the following individuals for their amazing support!

Dorli Bokel
 Carol Bradley
 Melissa Fitzgerald
 Wendy Fox-Grage
 Cindy Kalkwarf
 Shirley Olson
 Anu Sahai
 Elizabeth Vandenburg
 Elizabeth von Holle

Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce
 and
 Friends of Beth Tudan
 (birthday fundraiser)

Did You Know: There are Suffragist Exhibits to View in Washington, D.C. and Virginia?

By Adarsh Trehan

August 26, 2019 was Women's Equality Day and it celebrated 99 years since women were granted the right to vote. On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was certified by the Secretary of State, Bainbridge Colby. You can learn more about the suffragists' long struggle to get women the right to vote by attending several local exhibits.

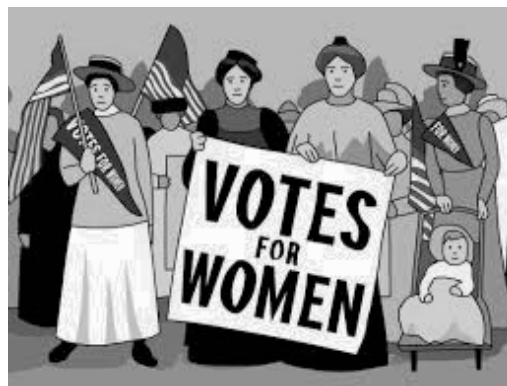
«**Women Creating a More Perfect Democracy: 100 Years of the League of Women Voters**» at Freeman Store and Museum, 131 Church Street, NE, Vienna, Virginia 22180. The exhibit runs from Noon to 4 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday, through December 2019. (LWVFA Centennial Exhibit).

“**Votes for Women: A Portrait of Persistence**” at The National Portrait Gallery will run through January 5, 2020.

“**Shall Not Be Denied: Women Fight for the Vote**” at the Library of Congress. The exhibit is on view through September 30, 2020.

“**Rightfully Hers: American Women and the Vote**” at the National Archives. The exhibit is on view through January 3, 2021.

There will be events occurring all over the country on August 26, 2020, celebrating the centennial of the women's right to vote. One of the major events will be the inauguration of the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial in Lorton, Virginia which will “honor the Suffragists who fought for and won the women's right to vote.” (From: Turning Point Suffragist Memorial material).



Spotlight on Voter Services

By Cindy Kalkwarf, Chair, Voter Services

The Voter Services volunteer team focuses on registering people to vote, getting out the vote, providing educational and informational public services, and initiating outreach programs to groups of potential voters.

Learn about two significant educational documents in the articles that follow: “*What’s On The Ballot*” and our new leaflets, “*What Officials Are We Voting for This Year?*” These materials inform and help educate the Fairfax community. Gathering and condensing these handouts requires substantial time and effort on the part of our members to see these projects through to fruition and ensure the utmost accuracy. Thank you team! And you if would like to contribute your knowledge, skills, and time to these efforts, please contact me at Cindy.Kalkwarf@LWV-Fairfax.org.

And Absentee Voting has started. This is a critical election year. See the article that follows on “*Submitting an Absentee Ballot*” to learn more. And spread the word. There is no excuse not to vote.

Absentee Voting in Fairfax County for 2019 General Election

By Bob Meredith

Important Things to Know

1. Your absentee ballot is **counted on election night**. There are **20 valid reasons to vote absentee in VA**. See the VA Department of Elections – www.elections.virginia.gov to see if you are eligible (refer to the *Reason Codes for Voting Absentee* section).
2. There are two ways to vote absentee: **in person and by mail**. Check your voter registration status (VA Voter Record) to make sure it is up-to-date – go to www.elections.virginia.gov/voterinformation

Voting Absentee by Mail

1. Watch the YouTube **How to fill out Your Mail-In Absentee ballot** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbfktaJw-94>.
2. Obtain a VA Absentee Ballot Application Form. Pick up locations include public libraries, and LWVFA voter registration events.
3. Or, go online to obtain an absentee ballot. Go to your VA Voter Record, using your Social Security number and VA Driver’s License
 - a. Print, complete, and sign the absentee ballot application (PDF). For additional information go to <https://www.elections.virginia.gov>. Submit it to the Fairfax County Office of Elec-

tions (FFXOoE):

- b. Scan it and then email the application to absenteeballot@fairfaxcounty.gov or
- c. Mail - Office of Elections at Box 10161, Fairfax, VA 22038 or
- d. Fax - Office of Elections at 703-324-3725
- e. Once the application is received and accepted, your absentee ballot will be sent to you in three business days. Questions - call the Office of Elections at 703-222-0776 (TTY 711).

4. Special Situations include: a) Special Federal ID Requirements for Certain First Time Absentee by Mail Voters (uncommon); b) Emergency Absentee Voting Information on these, including application forms are on the website: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting>.

5. College student registration information can be found at: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/college-student-info/index.html>

6. Military and overseas voters can find specific information regarding absentee voting at:

<https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/military-overseas/index.html>.

THE FIRST ABSENTEE BALLOT MAILOUT IS ON/OR ABOUT SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

United States Postal Service (USPS) Delivery Delays:

USPS First Class mail delivery is generally 3-5 business days. Please take this into consideration so that it can be counted. **It has to be received in the Fairfax County Office of Elections by 7:00 pm on Election Day.**

To track the status of your absentee ballot application and ballot, view your VA Voter Record.

Note: The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot online, by mail, by fax, or by email is **7 days prior** to Election Day by 5:00 pm.

Absentee ballots, to be counted, must be returned to the FFXOOE by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day, November 5, 2019.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **September 20:** In-Person Absentee Voting begins at the Fairfax County Government Center, Conference Rooms 2/3
- **October 15:** Voter Registration Deadline (In Person/By Mail) 5:00 p.m.; online: 11:59 p.m.
- **October 29:** Deadline to apply to receive an Absentee Ballot by mail, fax and online: 5:00 p.m.
- **November 2:** Deadline for In-Person Absentee Voting, 5:00 p.m.
- **November 5:** Absentee Ballot return deadline, 7:00 p.m.

IN-PERSON ABSENTEE VOTING LOCATIONS (Photo ID Required)

Absentee Voting at the Fairfax County Government

Center: 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035 (Conference Rooms 2/3)

September 20-October 16: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Thursdays: 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays (October 5 ONLY): 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Sundays closed.

October 17-November 2: Weekdays: 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Closed Sundays and October 14 Columbus Day)

Absentee Voting at Satellite Voting Locations:

Franconia Governmental Center, Lorton Library, Mason Governmental Center, McLean Governmental Center, Mount Vernon Governmental Center, North County Governmental Center, Providence Community Center, Sully Governmental Center, and West Springfield Governmental Center.

Schedule: October 17-November 2: Weekdays: 3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 pm.

“What Officials Are We Voting for This Year?” LWVFA League Debuts New Leaflet

By Sidney Johnson

Hands up, everyone who knows what the Commonwealth’s Attorney does! How about the difference between Constitutional offices and county offices?

When we, the new Voter Education Committee members, set out to write new leaflets for the general public about the roles and responsibilities of our elected officials, we realized that we had gaps in our knowledge, too. There were things we sort of knew, but vaguely.

This year of electing state legislators and Constitutional and county officers is particularly confusing—and off-putting—so we decided to start with a leaflet explaining in ordinary language what jobs we are electing state, Constitutional, and county officials to do. We want to show that local elections determine who will make decisions affecting our everyday lives. The state and local election year usually gets the lowest voter participation rate. In 2015 the turnout statewide was 29.1 per cent. We want to change that.

We plan to write three more leaflets, one for each year of the four-year cycle from presidential election to presidential election. Next year we will explain what the President, Vice President, Representatives, and Senators do. We will also give information about the City of Fairfax election and those town elections that are held in even-numbered years. The year after that, we will explain the roles of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and state delegates as well as Constitutional offices up for election in odd years. In the third leaflet we will describe again what the U.S. Representatives do and the U.S. Senator who is elected in the same year.

After that, we are back to the leaflet we have produced for this year. We hope these leaflets will be perennial, that they will not be relevant only to the particular year in which they are produced. Each year we will bring out only the leaflet that is appropriate for that year. That is why we are not dating the leaflets by the year. We'll see if the idea works.

A PDF of the leaflet will be posted on our website. Printed copies may be obtained from the office for voter registration and education events. We will focus on areas where citizens may not be highly engaged.

Members of the Voter Education Committee are Nancy Roodberg, Celeste Land, Sherri Gillam, Ann Parham, and Sidney Johnson. We would love to have new members with new ideas about how to get potential voters to become active ones. Please contact Sidney at sidneyjohnson3@verizon.net.

What's on the Ballot (WOTB)

by Ronna Pazdral

“What's on the Ballot” is one of the signature informational and educational voter hand-outs that the LWVFA has been creating and distributing since 1973. Initially called “What Will Be on the Ballot,” it was a single-page handout; now we can barely fit everything on two double-sided pages. The current 2019 edition is available on the LWVFA website (<https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/ballot>) and hard copies available at our Packard Center office.

Many of our Life members were “present at the creation” of the original single-page handout. Typed up and printed in-house in the memorable days of typewriters as well as mimeograph and Gestetner duplicating machines, our stalwart volunteers deserve a shout out for their efforts.

Today, as then, each year's issue follows the four-year rotational cycle of the Virginia elections. This year's release is “cycle 4,” and covers the Virginia General Assembly (State Senate and House of Delegates) as well as all Fairfax County and Constitutional officials. The candidate information is extracted from information provided by the Virginia Department of Elections and the Fairfax County Office of Elections.

In addition to listing the candidates competing for office positions, the 2019 WOTB includes a public school bond question. In past years, these ballot questions have proposed changes to the Virginia State Constitution as well as requesting approval for funds pertaining to Public Safety; Parks and Park Facilities; Transportation; Human Services and Community Development; Public School Bonds; and Meals Tax, all issues directly impacting Fairfax County residents.

Additional information on absentee and in-person early voting schedules is offered on the back page, along with other voting reminders, registration deadlines, photo ID requirements, etc.

Once the document has been checked and re-checked, it goes off to the printer for as many as 12,000 copies to be printed. Copies are delivered for dissemination to Fairfax County libraries and Fairfax County District Supervisors' offices. The Voter Services team and LWVFA units take the lead in ensuring distribution at voter registration events, candidate forums, Metro stations, and other community organizations and public events.

Putting WOTB together is a team effort, with many seasoned eyes reviewing and hands delivering this valuable handout to the Fairfax County community. Thanks to our members who have been involved in the past in this endeavor! We need members with interests in all aspects to help put together the 2020 Presidential Election WOTB edition (content, format, distribution, etc.). If you want to get involved, contact Cindy Kalkwarf (cindy.kalkwarf@lwv-fairfax.org).

Redistricting Forum November 17, 2019 1-4 p.m.

With the Leagues of Women Voters of: The Fairfax Area, Arlington, Falls Church City, Loudoun County, Prince William County, and One Virginia 2021.
Info and Register: <https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/2019-redistricting-forum> **--Save the date--**

Unit Discussion Meeting Locations

Topic: Electoral Systems and LWVUS Concurrence

Members and visitors are encouraged to attend any meeting convenient for them, including the “At Large Meeting” and briefing on Saturdays when a briefing is listed. As of September 1, 2019, the locations were correct; please use phone numbers to verify sites and advise of your intent to attend. Some meetings at restaurants may need reservations.

Saturday, October 5, 2019

10 a.m. At-Large Unit and Briefing
League Conference Room
Packard Center (inside Annandale Community Park)
4026 Hummer Road
Annandale, 22003
Contact: Julie, 703-476-8347

Wednesday, October 9

9:30 a.m. McLean Day (McL)
Star Nut Café
1445 Laughlin Ave.
McLean, 22101
Contact: Susan, 703-893-2229 or
Peggy, peggyknight49@gmail.com

9:45 a.m. Mount Vernon Day (MVD)
Mt. Vernon Government Center
2511 Parkers Lane
Alexandria, 22306
Contact: Gail, 703-360-6561 or
Diana, 703-704-5325

10 a.m. Fairfax Station (FXS)
9111 Octavia Ct.
Springfield, 22153
Contact: Sherry, 703-730-8118 or
Beverly, 703-451-4438

7:15 p.m. Fairfax City Evening (FCE)

TBD
Contact: TBD

7:30 p.m. Reston Evening (RE)

Hunter Mill District Community Room
North County Government Center
1801 Cameron Glen Drive
Reston, 20190
Contact Gail gailvb12@yahoo.com

Thursday, October 10

9 a.m. Reston Day (RD)

21125 Cardinal Pond Terrace #319
Ashburn, 20147
Contact: Barbara (703) 437-0795
or bseandlte@earthlink.net

9:30 a.m. Springfield (SPF)

Packard Center
4026-B Hummer Road
Annandale, 22003
Contact: Marge, 703-451-0589

11:30 a.m. Centreville-Chantilly (CCD)

Lunch at Food Court, Wegman's
14361 Newbrook Dr.
Chantilly, 20151
Contact: Susan, 703-391-0666

1 p.m. Oakton/Vienna (OV)

Patrick Henry Library
101 Maple Ave E
Vienna, VA 22180
Contact: Mary, 703-319-2185

7:45 p.m. Mount Vernon Evening (MVE)

Paul Spring Retirement Community
Mt. Vernon Room
7116 Fort Hunt Road
Alexandria, 22307
Contact: Jane, 703-960-6820 or
Susan, 703-587-4790

Monday, October 14

1:30 p.m. Greenspring (GSP)

Hunters Crossing Classroom
Spring Village Drive
Springfield, 22150
Contact: Edith, 703-644-3970 or
Gloria, 703-852-5113

November: General Meeting

Redistricting Forum



The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA)
 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403
 703-658-9150. Web address: www.lwv-fairfax.org

**The LWVFA Fairfax VOTER ©
 October, 2019**

**Anu Sahai, Co-President
 Nancy Roodberg, Co-President
 Katherine Ingmanson, Editor
 Vacant, Layout Editor**

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the public to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any person at least 16 years old, male or female, may become a member.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties, and any use of the League of Women Voters name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.

LWVFA MEMBERSHIP / RENEWAL FORM

Dues year is July 1 – June 30

Membership Dues: Individual \$65 _____ **Household \$90** (2 persons, 1 Voter) _____ **Student** _____ **Free** _____
 (A subsidy fund is available; check here _____ and include whatever amount you can afford.)

Membership Status: New _____ **Renewal** _____ **Reinstatement** _____ **Donation** _____
 (Dues are not tax deductible.)

Tax-deductible donations must be written on a separate check or PayPal to “LWVFA Ed Fund.”
 (Please print clearly)

Name _____ **Unit (if renewing)** _____
Address _____
City _____ **State** _____ **Zip + 4** _____
Phone (H) _____ **(M)** _____ **E-Mail** _____

**Please make checks payable to “LWVFA” mail to:
 LWVFA, 4026-B Hummer Road Annandale VA 22003-2403**

OR

Join Online at: [www. LWV-Fairfax.org/join.ht](http://www.LWV-Fairfax.org/join.ht)

I am interested in becoming involved in (please indicate by circling the appropriate bullet(s)):

- **Providing organizational support** (graphic design, website development/maintenance, fundraising/grant writing)
- **Voter Service** (e.g., voter registration drives, candidate forums, developing Voters’ Guides)
- **Researching/writing about issues in which LWVFA has an interest** (e.g., environment, firearms safety, mental health, schools, domestic violence, criminal justice; or, chairing an LWVFA study committee on voter turnout or human trafficking).
- **Representing the League in governmental fora** (e.g., serving as LWVFA representative on Fairfax County citizens’ committees and agencies, such as affordable housing, Fairfax County Public Schools).
- **Other** _____