# Everything You Need to Know - and Share - About Elections

By Lois Page, Program Chair, and Janey George, Voters Service Outreach Chair -League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area

Every year about this time, those of us who ought to know a lot about elections start to wonder if we really know all that we should. Do we know enough to give accurate information to new young voters? To brand new citizens? To our neighbors? Thus our kick off for the 2008-2009 LWVFA program year covers a lot of key information about voting, with a timeliness that allows people to register to vote and apply for absentee ballots as needed. In general, a tremendous amount of information on elections (registration, absentee voting,

upcoming elections, polling places, candidate information) can be found at the Fairfax County elections website: <a href="www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb">www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb</a>. City of Fairfax residents may find additional information at <a href="mailto:GeneralRegistrar@fairfaxva.gov">GeneralRegistrar@fairfaxva.gov</a>.

One thing we all need to know is that in Virginia we vote every single year. Yes, 2008 is a national election year, but good government starts locally. It is on the local stage that potential candidates receive the training and experience that turns them into responsible politicians for the future. The following chart includes the schedule for elections in Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax for the next few years:

Year	Federal	State-wide	General	Local/County	Town (all May
			Assembly	& City of	elections)
				Fairfax	,
2008	•President			City of Fairfax-	•Clifton-Mayor,
	•Vice-President			(May)	5 Council
	•House of Reps.			Mayor	•Herndon-Mayor,
	•Senate			6 Council	6 Council
				Members,	•Vienna-Mayor,
				5 School Board,	3 Council
2009		•Governor	•House of	City of Fairfax	•Vienna-3 Council
		•Lt. Gov	Delegates	Commissioner	
		•Att'y Gen.		of Revenue	
				Treasurer	
2010	•House of Reps.			City of Fairfax-	•Clifton-Mayor,5
				(May)	Council
				Mayor	•Herndon-Mayor,
				6 Council	6 Council
				5 School Board	•Vienna-Mayor,
					3 Council
2011			•State Senate	County	•Vienna-3 Council
			•House of	•Board of	
			Delegates	Supervisors	
				•Commonwealth's	
				Attorney	
				•Sheriff	
				•Soil & Water	
				Commission;	
				School Board	

### **VOTER REGISTRATION**

The first thing Virginians need to know about voting is that they must register to vote. Interestingly, this is not true of one state, North Dakota, and seven states allow voters to register on the day of the election. Ensuring that voters register is a key factor in voter turnout. This may not sound very profound, but the low voter turnout so often mentioned after an election is a percentage of *eligible* voters (63.8% in 2004). The percentage of registered voters who voted that same year was 88.5 percent, a fairly respectable showing. That means, of course, that 27.9 percent of eligible voters were not registered, who most likely would have voted if they were registered. (*National Voter*, June 2008, p.5) Next month's program will take a look at some of the reasons why people may not be registered.

# Frequently Asked Questions About REGISTERING TO VOTE in Virginia

### 1) Am I eligible to vote?

Answer: you are eligible to register to vote if you are

- A citizen of the United States
- At least 18 years of age by the next general election
- A resident of Virginia
- Have had your voting rights restored by the Governor if you have ever been convicted of a felony. (Unique to Virginia)
- 2) When is the next election?

Answer: November 4, 2008

### 3) When can I register to vote?

Answer: You can register to vote anytime. However, applications submitted during the 29 days before a general and primary election will not be processed until after that election. Registration will then be permanent under most circumstances.

# 4) So what does that make the deadline for the November election??

Answer: The deadline to register to vote for the next election **or to submit a change of address form** is 6:00 p.m. on Monday, October 6. (For additional information call the Fairfax General Registrar's Office at 703 222-0776 or City of Fairfax General Registrar's Office at 703 385-7890.) Mail-in applications must be postmarked on or before October 6.

### 5) How do I register?

Answer: There are four ways:

 a. Inperson from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday at the Fairfax County General Registrar's Office 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 323 Fairfax Virginia 22035-0081

Phone: 703 222-0076

Or, in City of Fairfax,

General Registrar's Office / Sisson House, 10455 Armstrong St. Fairfax, Virginia 22030 703-385-7890

- b. In person at other registration sites such as community festivals where a trained assistant registrar, such as some League of Women Voters members, can take your application. Be sure to get a receipt if you ask the assistant registrar to mail it in. Call 703 324 4700 for a list of other sites.
- c. By mail, to the Fairfax County address above or, if a City of Fairfax resident, to General Registrar's Office / Sisson House, 10455 Armstrong St. Fairfax, Virginia 22030. The form will contain a pre-addressed envelope. If you register by mail you should include a copy of your current and valid photo identification or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck or other government document that shows your name and address. You should receive a Voter Information Card within 30 days. If you do not, call your respective Office of Elections number above to follow up.
- d. Military personnel and their families, plus other overseas voters, may register to vote by using a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) which can be downloaded from <a href="www.fvap.gov">www.fvap.gov</a>. You can sign it and mail, fax, or scan and send an e-mail attachment to your local registrar, so long as it reaches the office by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 6, 2008. Please note that the original post card application with the original signature, must be mailed to the registrar's office and received no later than the close of polls on election day to be processed. Sounds complicated? Maybe the following website can clarify this: <a href="www.sbe,virginia.gov/cms/Absentee\_Voting/Military">www.sbe,virginia.gov/cms/Absentee\_Voting/Military</a> Overseas Citizens/Index.html

# 6) Where do I get a registration application? Answer: You can pick a Virginia Voter Registration Application at the following sites:

- Department of Motor Vehicles (5)
- Military recruitment offices
- Public assistance agency offices
- Public libraries
- Public schools
- District Government Centers, Board of Supervisors offices
- Citizens Assistance in the County Government Center lobby
- Judicial Center information desk

- Web site of the State Board of Elections: <a href="http://www.sbe.virginia.gov/cms/Forms">http://www.sbe.virginia.gov/cms/Forms</a>
   <a href="Publications/Index.html">Publications/Index.html</a>
- Voter drives, such as local elections groups, civic associations, churches, League of Women Voters outreach events at community gatherings

# 7) Are there other restrictions when you register by mail?

Answer: Yes. If you register by mail, you must vote in person the first time you vote You are exempt from this if you are in the military service or a dependent, an overseas citizen, a full-time student, or disabled. However, if exempt from this restriction, you must still provide a photocopy of a valid identification with your mailed absentee ballot.

# 8) Do I have to state my political party preference? Answer: No

# 9) I'm already registered but moving. Will I be able to vote in the next election?

Answer: Registered voters must notify their general registrar in writing of any change of address to insure their voting privilege. The back of your Voter Information Card (which we hope you have carefully saved) provides a form. Full legal name, home address, date moved to the address, birth date, the last four digits of your social security number, complete address of previous registration and a signature must be provided. If you are moving to another city or county, you must complete a new voter registration application to update your address. This must be done by October 6 for the November election.

# 10) I am a college student living away from home. Where should I register?

Answer: You can register either at your home or school, depending on state law. It is important to update your registration each time you move. If you are registered at your home address while you are at school, remember to request an absentee ballot at least 30 days before the election. (See absentee ballots)

# 11) Where can I get assistance for someone who doesn't speak English?

Answer: Check with registrar. The Voting Rights Act requires local election officials to provide bilingual voter registration applications, ballots, and language assistance once the minority reaches a certain percentage of the population.

# 12) Is the information on the Voter Registration Form confidential?

Answer: The information is a matter of public record. However, recent legislation prevents

states from using this information for any purpose other than voter registration. States that require a Social Security number are required to protect the confidentiality. This is why our recently mailed Virginia Voter cards no longer have a Social Security number, but a new registration number.

# 13) What information does the registration form require?

Answer: See insert: Virginia Voter Registration Application

### ABSENTEE VOTING

### How Do I Vote If I Am Out of Town?

The issues surrounding absentee voting are many and include the question as to why you must have a reason to vote absentee and the problems that people have voting absentee from overseas. Next month's study will look at some of these.

### Frequently Asked Questions About ABSENTEE VOTING

# 1) I will be out of town on Election Day. Can I vote absentee?

Answer: Any registered voter who expects to be away or otherwise physically unable to go the polls on Election Day may request an absentee ballot.

# 2) My commute is too long to get back in time to vote. How can I vote?

Answer: You can vote absentee if you will be working and comuting for 11 or more hours between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., if you are a primary caregiver of a confined family member, an Election Officer (poll watcher), or on vacation. (Other acceptable reasons are listed on the ballot application below.)

# 3) Is working in Washington D.C. or even Alexandria considered being out of town?

Answer: Yes. Anyone out of Fairfax County on Election Day may vote absentee, if you meet the above time frame. This includes Washington, D.C, Arlington, or Alexandria, among others

# 4) What if I just want to avoid the hassle on Election Day.

Answer: You have to swear that the reason you selected is true. The penalty is a felony conviction under VA law (conviction would bar you from voting for life.) The maximum penalty is \$2500 fine and/or 10 years in jail.

### 5) Where do I apply to vote absentee?

Answer: Four places:

A. By mail. Form may be requested from the General Registrar's Office (address and

# **Virginia Voter Registration Application Form**

Use this form to register to vote in Noterial current name and address, you do note the current name and address.	/irginia or report a ch not need to re-registe	ange in name or address r.	s. If you are a	ready registered with your
To register to vote in Virginia, you m	iust:			
· Be a United States citizen		· Have had your voting	The second residence of the second second	red if you have ever
Be a resident of Virginia		been convicted of a f		La constant de la con
· Be 18 years old by the next general	COMMON BUTTON COMMON TO STORY	<ul> <li>Have had your capace declared mentally inc</li> </ul>	apacitated in	a Circuit Court
Starred (*) items are required. I may be denied. Once your local	f you do not compl registrar approves	ete all of the items tha your application, you	t are marke will receive	d with *, your application a voter card <b>by mail</b> .
<b>Privacy Act Notice:</b> This form requires your social sec security number or any other information necessary to Virginia Constitution, Article II, § 2, Title 24.2 of the Code and restrict its use to official purposes only.	determine your qualification	to vote. Federal law (the Privacy	Act and Help Ame	erica Vote Act) and state law (the
WARNING: INTENTIONALLY MAKING A MATERIALLY UNDER VIRGINIA LAW AS A FELONY. VIOLATORS MA				
1 *Are you a citizen of the United States of America? YES NO		t 18 years of age on or before lection day? YES NO	to ei	u checked "NO" in response ther of these questions, ot complete this form.
	Male Female ender	*Date of Birth	) Daytir	ne Telephone Number
				None None
* Last Name	* First Name	*Full Mide	dle or Maiden	Name *Suffix (Jr., Sr., III, Etc.)
3				
*Residence (Permanent) Home Addre	ss	Apt/Unit/Lot/Rm/Ste City/1	Гоwn	Zip Code
If Rural Address or Homeless, please	describe where you	reside	E-mail addr	ess
Mailing Address ( <i>If different</i> )/ Virgini if applicable ( <i>include Zip Code</i> )	a P.O.Box or Uniform	ed Service Address,	City or Name of Cit	County y or County of Residence
4 * Have you ever been convicted of a	en e	State where convicted		
If YES, have your voting rights been re	estored? YES No	O If YES, when restored?		
* Have you ever been judged mental If YES, has court restored you to capa		'ES NO If <i>YES</i> , when restored?	M / D D	Y Y Y Y
6 Registration Statement: I swear/affiring information provided on this form is truthe Privacy Act Notice on the front of the	e. I authorize the cance			
*Signature (or mark if unable to sign	)			
If applicant is unable to sign due to a physical disability, w	rite the name/address of person	who assisted. (Required). Check/desc	cribe if you have a disal	ility that requires accommodation in order to vote.
Election Official on Election Day. of your personal safety f		or stalked you and have filed a complaint	against that person wi	ranted a protective court order, or (c) are in fear th a magistrate or law enforcement (must attach Protective Order Threatened/Stalked
7 Commonwealth of Virginia-*		<b>-</b>		
			VII	
No, I am not currently registered				
Yes, I am registered to vote at and	other address in Virgi	nia or in another state. <b>If</b>	YES, the inform	ation below must be completed:
Full Name as Registered		Date of Birth		cial Security Number et 4 digits required)
			\	
Address at which you were previous	y registered to vote	City/Town	State	Zip Code
City/County/Town of Residence (if ap	oplicable). This cancell	ation information will be sent t	to the county or	city and state you entered above.

phone number above) beginning 10 months before the general election. Requests for a ballot must be received by the General Registrar at least SEVEN DAYS before the election—October 28, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. They are also available at registration sites and government centers. The League Office often has a number on hand as well as being provided at Voters Service Outreach events.

- B. In person at the Registrar's Office
- C. Online: Web site of the State Board of Elections: <a href="http://www.sbe.virginia.gov/cms/Forms\_Publications/Index.html">http://www.sbe.virginia.gov/cms/Forms\_Publications/Index.html</a>
- D. Military personnel and their families serving overseas and other overseas voters are permitted to apply for an absentee ballot by email attachment, using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). People meeting this criteria may request to receive the ballot via e-mail. The original card with an original signature has to be mailed so that it is received by the close of polls on Election Day. Every voting family member must send in a separate card and fill out forms sent specifically to them. The ballot itself must be sent through postal mail or delivered personally to the Office of Elections.

### 6) How do I cast my vote on an absentee basis?

Answer: Two ways:

- a. By mail or in person, voted ballots must be received in the office by 7:00 p.m. of Election Day to be counted.
- b. You may vote in person in the Registrar's Office or in satellite locations before a general election. IN-PERSON ABSENTEE VOTES MAY BE CAST THROUGH THE SATURDAY BEFORE EACH ELECTION DAY (this year, NOV. 1, 2008). YOU MAY BEGIN VOTING IN PERSON THIS ELECTION ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2008.

### 7) Where are the in-person satellite voting locations?

Answer: Besides the registrar's office at the Government Center, there are 7 locations; you need to call 703 222-0776 or visit the county website mentioned above to discover hours of operation:

- Franconia Governmental Center
- Mason Governmental Center
- McLean Governmental Center
- Mt Vernon Governmental Center
- North County Governmental Center
- Sully District Governmental Center
- West Springfield Governmental Center

# 8) What information does the absentee ballot application ask for?

Answer: See next page for copy of first page of absentee ballot application that lists the criteria for voting absentee. The second page of the application, not included here, gives you, in Part B, the opportunity to tell them where to send the ballot, especially important if you have moved. (Part F on this page gives you the opportunity to submit change of address information.) Part C gives you the opportunity to tell them if you need assistance marking the ballot due to disability, blindness, or inability to read which will alert officials to the need to send instruction to the assistant. Part D asks you to sign a statement that all the information is true with the penalties mentioned in #4 under Absentee Voting. Part E is where the Assistant signs for the person mentioned in Part C.

### 9) Is there any problem with voting absentee?

Answer: According to election officials, the absentee ballot must include <u>all</u> information requested on the B envelope, including the date, or it will have to be rejected. This happens in an unfortunate number of cases.

### **VOTING ON ELECTION DAY**

### Going to the Polls

Assuming you have navigated the registration process successfully and you will be in town on Election Day, you may still confront some complications at the polls. A close look at some of these, such as long lines or confusing ballots, will be part of next month's study.

# Frequently Asked Questions About VOTING ON ELECTION DAY

### 1) How will I know where to vote?

Answer: The Registrar's Office determines eligibility and confirms acceptance of a registration application by mailing to the registrant a voter information card which includes your election districts and the name and address of the voting location. You should check with the General Registrar if you are not notified within a reasonable time of your voting status. You can also find your polling place online at <a href="www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb">www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb</a> or GeneralRegistrar@fairfaxva.gov

2) When will the polls be open?

Answer: From 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

3) Is there any way I can help relieve the anticipatedlong lines at the polls?

See What You Should Know, Page EF-7, Col. 1

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY			
Precinct:	District:	Application number:	Reviewed by:
Received: $\square$ In person $\square$ By m	ail □ By fax □ Other	Application accepted: $\square$ YES $\square$ NO	Reason not accepted:
Date received: MMM / DD		Ballot to be: Mailed Voted in person	on ( <i>On machine</i> : YES NO)
Abcontoo Bo	llot Annli	ontion	Commonwealth of Virginia
Absentee Ba	- 150 - 150		d
_		ach election. Must Complete Parts A	through D (and E/F IT applicable).
I am registered to vote in the		Caradal Floridae	inner Dineralism Dinera
I am applying to vote in:			rimary □ Republican Primary
To be held on:/	] <sub>/</sub> Pri	nted Last Name:	
		d voter may qualify to vote abse	ntee by completing one of the
following sta		d b.,	
		a by mail may be ineligible to apply to bunty/city in which I am registered to	vote absentee by mail. See Instructions.
		):	
		or concern.	
			);
			D):
			residence is <b>no longer available to you</b> ,
provide your last date			residence is no longer available to you,
Service Servic	and the second s		t (if your Virginia residence is <b>no longe</b> r
		esidence in Virginia):	
available to you, prov	ide your last date of re	ssidence in virginia,.	
→ I will be unable to go	to the polls in person	on Election Day for the following rea	son:
□ 2A My disability or illness	(nature of disability o	r illness):	
$\square$ <b>2B</b> I am primarily and per	sonally responsible fo	r the care of a disabled/ill family mem	ber confined at home.
Their Name:		Nature of their Dis	ability/illness:
$\square$ <b>2C</b> My pregnancy.			
□ <b>5A</b> I have a religious obliq	gation (religion and na	ture of obligation):	
→ lam:			
And the second s	ing to/from home for 1	1 or more hours between 6:00 AM and	17:00 PM on Election Day
Working/Commuting:	AM –	PM.	17.50 TWI OII Election Day.
- JD Commed, convicted 0	i a misasmeanoi (piat	og address of commentally.	
□ 4A An electoral board me	ember, registrar, office	r of election, or custodian of voting eq	uipment.
			for other offices/issues will not be sent.)
SBE-701 REV 7/08		on a transfer section of the annual contract of the section of the	ntee Ballot Application continues —
The second secon			

### What You Should Know, From Page EF-5

Answer: YES! BECOME AN ELECTION OFFICER. Call 703 324-4706 or check web site <a href="https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb">www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb</a>. The hours are long but you can split a shift if you get someone to do it with you. You get paid, and can see all your neighbors. (You are usually assigned to your home precinct.)

4) What happens if bad weather and traffic prevents you from getting to the polls on time?

Answer: Protocol exists for extending hours, but it was not implemented by the political parties last February during the primary.

### 5) Will I need to show some sort of I.D.?

Answer: Yes. The General assembly passed legislation that requires you to provide I.D. or sign an Affirmation of Identity in order to vote.

### 6) What forms of I.D. are acceptable?

Answer: The following will work:

- •Virginia voter identification card (see why you need to save it?)
- Va. Driver's license or special ID card issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles
- •Valid U.S. passport
- •Military ID
- •Any Federal, state or local government issued ID
- •Employer issued photo
- Social Security Card

### 7) What if I turn up without any of these?

Answer: You may sign, under oath, an Affirmation of Identity, which is your certification in writing that the name and address information being provided is correct.

# 8) I am a busy person. When am I least likely to stand in a long line?

Answer: 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. are the least busy times. You may wonder why we don't vote on weekends or declare a holiday so that all don't have to interrupt jobs to vote. We will take a look at that in next month's study. An additional note on this issue: an increased number of election workers would make shorter lines for all. Go to <a href="https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb">www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb</a> to find out about becoming an election worker or to download an application.

### 9) What kind of voting machine will I be using?

Answer: According to County Election officials, "every precinct will have at least one optical scanner and from 3 to 6 touch screen machines (depending upon the size of the precinct.) Voters will be encouraged (but not required) to use the

paper ballot which will keep the lines moving faster since more voters can vote at the same time. The County is planning to print enough paper ballots for 100% turnout, so it won't be caught short!" Optical scanner voting machines are being introduced in response to recently passed state law to answer concerns about electronic machines not leaving a paper trail. See sample paper ballot, which must be run through an optical scan reader.

# WHAT LWVFA DOES TO SERVE VOTERS The League of Women Voters to the Rescue

The League of Women Voters was formed right after women obtained the right to vote in order to make sure these new voters became informed voters. We feel we are needed more than ever these days, and not just for women. Consequently the LWV of the Fairfax Area puts considerable effort into providing the following informational voting services. The first three items also appear on our website, www.lwv-fairfax.org:

- •VOTER'S GUIDE—Local and state Leagues request biographies, photos, and answers to questions of those qualified to be on the ballot. Their answers will be published in the *Connection Newspapers* throughout the City of Fairfax and Fairfax County approximately two weeks before the election.
- "WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT?"—In user-friendly language and in readable form, the League publishes every autumn a list of all the decisions the voters will be making, including candidates and bond issues. This publication will appear on our website and in our October newsletter in late September. Printed versions will be passed out at League voter outreach events (community fairs, etc.) before the election. Each library will receive copies as well as governmental offices.
- FACTS FOR VOTERS—Updated yearly, this is an easily accessible listing of every elected official (and some appointed ones) for voters in Fairfax County and City of Fairfax from the President of the U.S to local school board members and administration. Voting registration information, registrar's offices, local and regional libraries and more are included. Distribution is the same as in "What's on the Ballot?"
- VOTING 101 CLASSES—for this election they will be held in four regional libraries in October: Chantilly, Oct. 8, 7:30 p.m.; the City of Fairfax, Oct. 5, 2:00 p.m.; Reston, Oct. 15, 7:30 p.m.; and Sherwood, Oct. 12 at 2:00 p.m. Classes will cover in more detail much of the information

		<i>ION SYSTEMS</i> 433-VOTE	
F		EMONSTRATION BAL	LOT
Completely fill in the	Oval annosite the name of	each candidate you wish to v	rote for as shown
PRESID		POET LAUREATE	COMMISSIONERS
(Vote for 0	ONE)	(Vote for ONE)	FOR NATIONAL PASTIMES (Vote for TWO)
THOMAS JEFFERSON		MARIANNE MOORE	
ABRAHAM LINCOLN		ROBERT FROST	JIM THORPE
			BILL RUSSELL
JOHN F. KENNEDY	$\bigcirc$	CARL SANDBURG	JOE DIMAGGIO
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER		T.S. ELIOT	
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT		EZRA POUND	PEGGY FLEMING
FRANKLIN D. NOOGLYLLI		LZKATOOND	
	0		Write-in 1
Write-in COMMISSIONER OF	MINISTER OF	Write-in MINISTER OF	Write-in 2
AMERICAN LITERATURE (Vote for ONE)	TRANSPORTATION (Vote for ONE)	COMIC RELIEF (Vote for ONE)	MINISTER OF ART (Vote for ONE)
ERNEST HEMINGWAY	AMELIA EARHART	LUCILLE BALL	ANDREW WYETH
WILLIAM FAULKNER	CHUCK YEAGER	вов норе	ALEXANDER CALDER
JOHN STEINBECK	ORVILLE WRIGHT	CAROL BURNETT	
	NEW ADMOTRONO	LILVEONIN	Write-in
SINCLAIR LEWIS	NEIL ARMSTRONG	LILY TOMLIN O	

covered in this study. This program will also be given at the Reston Community Center October 8.

- **PHONE BANKS**—Starting October 28, voting information seekers can call the League Office (703 658-9150) between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- WEB SITE—www.LWV-Fairfax.org—will contain "What's on the Ballot" and all the information in this study starting the first week in September.
- LINK TO NATIONAL LEAGUE INFORMATION SITE. Our local site will provide a link to a

- valuable source of voting information for the entire county, www.VOTE411.org
- **DEBATES**—Our local League is currently arranging for televised candidate debates for Districts 8, 10 and 11 which will be televised on Channel 10 (Fairfax County Public Television) at their Merrifield location.
- **REGISTRATION--**League members will be helping to register voters at several locations around the county until October 6.