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LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF VIRGINIA

The Virginia Voter

— 100+ Years Strong —

President's Message

A Little Breather

- Joan Porte, President, LWV-VA

No one really knows the true origin story of "April Fools' Day." If you read five different histories you will get seven different explanations. It seems it was just an excuse to be silly as spring returns after what used to be long, cold winters. It was that moment between winter and the back-breaking work of spring planting. I can understand that. We have just finished a "long" session of the General Assembly and now look towards two major elections. We need a little space for some silliness before we dive in again.

The State Board of Elections has already listed the deadlines and other important [dates](#) for the June and November elections. Our issue groups are making their lists of the many bills that have been carried over to 2025 and we will be working hard on the many Constitutional Amendments that will be up in the "short session" next year. It will be short, but action packed for sure.

So, as we go into this heavy election season and then flip into the next session, keep the idea of "April's fool" in mind and take care of that aspect of your life. Have fun and take time for yourself because it is easy to feel overwhelmed.

Next month, we will switch to a new newsletter/action alert system as the one we are using is losing its advocacy piece and wildly raising prices at the same

time. This new system will be Bonterra/EveryAction, which should be much more user-friendly. We hope that the transition will be smooth but if you experience any problems with the May newsletter, please let me know.

Thanks for all you do.

Joan

Election Rumors

- Chelsey Cartwright

In collaboration with the Algorithmic Transparency Institute, LWVUS will be hosting weekly election rumors briefings to address trends of mis/dis/mal-information. During these briefings we will get an overview of the MDM

landscape and answer any questions that you may have on addressing these concerns.

We hope that you can join us! And please share the invitation with those in your network who are interested in combating mis-dis-and-mal-information!

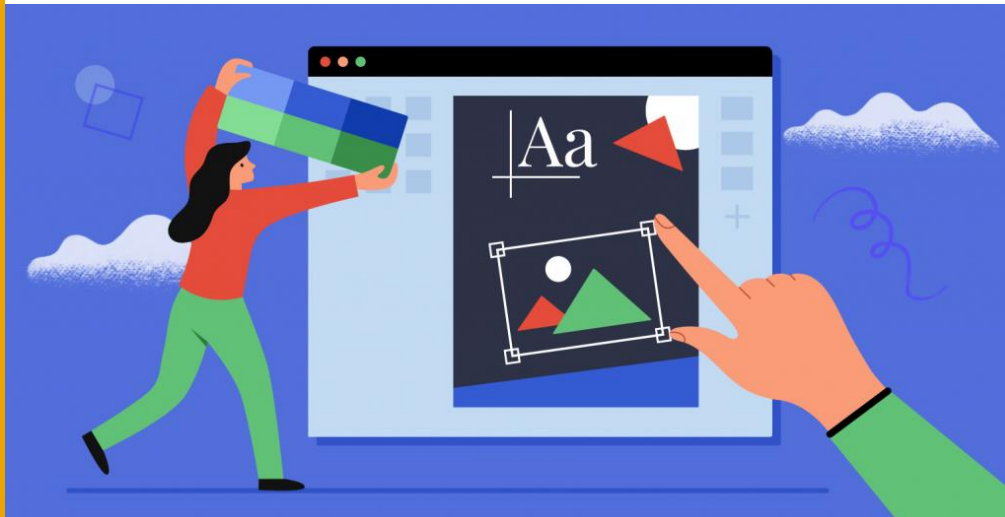
Briefings will occur each Monday from 3:30pm-4:15pm ET. Call details are below:

LWV & ATI: Election Rumors Briefing Call

When: Weekly from 3:30pm to 4:15pm on Monday Eastern Time - New York

Joining info: meet.google.com/npj-vsco-apy

Or dial: +1 631-898-6521 PIN: 190612266# [More phone numbers](#)



A League Poster Contest for Middle and High School Students

Poster Contest for Middle and High School Students

- Terry Newell, Liz Scheffer and Judith Collins

LWV-VA has just launched a contest titled **Every Vote Counts – and is Counted!** that invites Virginia middle and high school students to use their creativity to design and submit posters to help educate students and all voters on the importance of voting, the need to cast an informed vote, the security of votes and the accuracy of vote counting.

Students are invited to submit a poster for one of these contest themes:

- Voting is Important in Our Democracy
- Voting Requires Following Specific Laws
- Voting and a Vote Should Depend on True, Not False, Information
- Every Vote will be Handled Legally, Carefully and Counted Correctly

Posters will be judged by panels for adherence to the chosen theme, content accuracy, originality, artistic expression and attractiveness. Winning posters will be used this fall to support the League's efforts to inform and excite eligible voters about their critical role in upcoming elections and to help them avoid efforts to misinform or otherwise interfere with the right to vote. Student winners will be recognized by the League and receive a small financial reward.

WE NEED YOUR HELP. Please share information about the contest with individuals and groups that may have an interest in participating. Anyone can find out more about the contest and how to submit on the LWV-VA website:

<https://my.lwv.org/virginia/2024-youth-poster-contest>

Confessions From the Voting Booth

ISSUE DRIVEN,
PARTY BLIND.

LWV VA Podcast is Back Up and Running!

Confessions from the Voting Booth

- Candi Bradshaw

"Confessions From the Voting Booth," helmed by Advocacy Chair Denise Harrington and me, explores issues important to the League. The podcast is about bringing movers and shakers on for our position in the league. It's a chance for us to speak to our grass roots partners and our coalition organizations; and to hear from direct stakeholders--people who are directly

involved with the issues, such as if they have served in correctional facilities before, or if they have a relative who was affected by gun violence. We have also addressed ranked choice voting and the National Popular Vote.

Our mission is empowering and defending voters... which translates to making democracy work for everyone. Our core center belief is always focusing on voting and elections and removing barriers to voting. We make sure to educate and empower people with high quality information and to dispel mis/dis-information as well as expand our vision of issues that are important to our democracy.

Check out our podcast on Spotify or just a go to our website to access <https://my.lwv.org/virginia/podcastt>.

If you have ideas for upcoming shows [email me](#).

LWV-VA Advocacy

Support the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act

- LWV-US

Every day, the freedom to vote is under attack. Since the 2012 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* gutted the *Voting Rights Act* (VRA), at least twenty-nine states have passed ninety-four laws that make it harder to vote, with the burden falling hardest on Black voters and other voters of color.

We need a fully restored VRA to defend our democracy and protect the freedom to vote. That is why the League is proud to support the reintroduction of [HR14](#) and [S4](#), the *John L. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act*, vital legislation that is needed to fully restore and modernize the VRA and ensure that discriminatory voting policies are stopped in their tracks.

Tell your members of Congress to protect the freedom to vote and support the passage of the JLVRAA.

To write to your U.S. Legislators, click [here](#) Remember, you are writing as an individual. Thank you for your support!

APRIL 6 NATIONAL LIBRARY DAY



Partner Organizations - National Library Association

April 6 is National Library Day

- Nan Carmack, National Library Association President

Virginia boasts [93 public library systems](#) with 350+ buildings across the Commonwealth. [5+ million Virginians use them](#). Few Virginians are more than 20 minutes from their closest library where they can access literature, workforce development, job search support, lifelong learning opportunities, social interaction for children, parents, teens, and seniors, as well as support in

accessing government services. Virginia's libraries are the lifeblood of democracy in every community, protecting the First Amendment and the freedom of expression for every person.

The top three ways to celebrate include:

1. Get your library card!
2. Use your library!
3. Sign up for the [Virginia Library Association's Advocacy Alert](#) system so that you can participate in our democracy by helping to keep our libraries fully funded and free from censorship, as the need arises.

[The Virginia Library Association](#) was founded in 1905 to develop, promote, and improve library and information services, library staff, and the profession of librarianship in order to advance literacy and learning and to ensure access to information in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Would you like more information?

Please contact VLA President Nan Carmack [here](#).



Who Gets to Decide?

On March 26, members of the League of Women Voters joined with other individuals and organizations in front of the Supreme Court, standing up for each individual's right to access reproductive care. Inside, the Justices heard arguments concerning the chemical abortion pill Mifepristone. Photo by LWV-AAC member Nancy Brown.

Partner Organization - NoLef Turns

Restoration of Rights

- Sheba Williams

In a recent op-ed piece in the *Virginia Mercury*, NoLef Turns co-founder Sheba Williams detailed what it is like to lose your right to vote and where we are in the process of restoring the rights of returning citizens. You can read her excellent piece [here](#).

LWV-VA Supports Statehood for Washington DC

Washington DC has been described as a US colony. With a population larger than Wyoming's, the area has no voting representation in the U.S. Congress, yet is partially organized as being under their jurisdiction. DC citizens have long advocated to be declared a state with all the rights and responsibilities assigned to such bodies. At the request of LWV-DC, our state League has issued a resolution in support of this position. The resolution may be found [here](#).



Women's Legislative Roundtable Wrap Up

We celebrated our first series of Women's Legislative Roundtable in the new General Assembly Building. If you ever attended one in the Pocahontas Building, you know what an improvement this building is.

Each week we had experts discuss the various legislative priorities that the League of Virginia pursued this year. If you missed any, the full list and the recordings of each can be found on our website.

<https://my.lwv.org/virginia/advocacy/womens-legislative-roundtable-2024>

Remember that all of testimony and advocacy alerts are also on the website. Just click on "Advocacy" left side of the home page to find them all

<https://my.lwv.org/virginia/advocacy>.

Our fantastic issue groups are working on the list of bills that have been "continued" until 2025 (which normally frankly is a kiss of death) but we will pursue the ones that are of interest to us. You will be hearing more about them soon. The General Assembly will have to act on these by Nov 18 for them to have any chance in the 2025 session. In addition, we have all of the

Constitutional amendments, for voting and reproductive rights will be taken up in 2025.

April 17 is the date for the special "Budget Session" of the General Assembly. So far, the ARPA money for voting and elections we have been advocating for is still in the budget passed by the General Assembly. We have to check that it remains in the Budget after the Governor's review.

[Contact](#) the Governor to ask him to keep the \$2.8 million of ARPA money in the budget for Department of Elections. There is a drop-down box for "Administration – Elections." Or you can call 804-786-2211 and press one to leave a message. (The system is now working but it was down when we did our last action alert. If it isn't taking messages, try hitting 2 – some people had luck getting through that way.)



LWV-VA Affordable Housing Study

Housing Forward

- Alice Tousignant, LWV-VA

LWV-VA Board Member and Chair of our Affordable Housing Issue Group Alice Tousignant was asked to do a blog piece for HousingForward. It appears below.

When you think about the League of Women Voters (LWV), you most likely see it as an organization that defends and strengthens voting and elections, not as an advocate for affordable housing. That's partly true— voting and elections are its primary focus, but the LWV also advocates for many other [public policy issues](#). Today, that includes housing.

However, the LWV cannot advocate on any issue unless there is an official position at the national, state, or local level. The LWV of the United States (LWVUS) supports scores of issues under the headings of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy. The latter includes Healthcare, Criminal Justice, Fair Housing, and Urban Policy to name a few.

Don't forget the LWV is over 100 years old. That's a lot of time to develop positions on many issues!

The LWV of Virginia (LWV-VA) also has its own positions that specifically relate to Virginia, ranging from Campaign Finance to Gun Violence Prevention and Education. The LWV-VA can and does advocate for all of them.

When I joined the LWV in 2017 after a 40-year career in housing, my intention was to get more involved in voting and elections. That did happen, but initially I was focused on voter registration in low-income communities, including public housing. What I learned about my League colleagues during my first year is that equity and justice are among their top priorities—and that they have an insatiable appetite to learn about new issues.

Arriving at an official LWV position on an issue is not an easy ride. It involves a two-year study where all sides of the issue are examined and researched. A report is written and presented to the 15 local Leagues in the state for members to review, discuss and reach consensus on. The process is designed to educate members on the ins and outs of the policy to ensure they have the necessary information to be effective advocates on the issue.

In April 2018, a [New York Times article](#) based on Mathew Desmond's Eviction Lab research revealed that the City of Richmond had the second highest eviction rate for cities its size in the nation. Several other Virginia cities were in the top ten, including Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk and Chesapeake. Along with [Desmond's book *Evicted*](#), the article spurred the LWV of Metro Richmond to form a new Affordable Housing Committee. The group intended to advocate for solutions to the eviction crisis, but soon discovered there was no LWV-VA position on affordable housing. This led to a request to the LWV-VA to undertake a study in order to develop an official statewide policy position for affordable housing.

The [study](#) began in 2019 and culminated with the approval of the LWV-VA Affordable Housing position at the LWV-VA Convention in 2021. The study

involved representatives from all local Leagues in Virginia researching and learning about the issue. Its primary focus was affordable rental housing for very low-income households.

Findings from the study led LWV-VA to support additional state resources for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, permanent supportive housing and other programs. It also included support for policies to remove barriers to affordable housing such as easing zoning restrictions and protecting renters' rights. The report was presented to local Leagues with the goal of educating more than 1,500 local members, many of whom previously had little knowledge about housing needs and policy solutions.

To support this new affordable housing platform, the LWV-VA created a statewide Affordable Housing Committee tasked with state advocacy and continuing education. In 2022, a [second report](#) was produced, this time on the history and impact of housing segregation in Virginia.

A public forum on the findings of this study was held in April of 2023 at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, sponsored by Virginia Housing and other partners including HousingForward Virginia, the Virginia Housing Alliance, and HOME of Virginia.

Currently, League members at the local and state levels are being educated about manufactured housing and the [need to preserve mobile home parks](#) as affordable options for low-income households. Along with deteriorating quality and infrastructure, [national investors have recently begun buying up these parks](#) from local owners. [Substantial lot rent increases](#) usually follow. Zoning is another important issue emerging with League members, as they continue to learn how exclusionary zoning practices have impeded the creation of more affordable rental housing. LWV Affordable Housing Committees in several Virginia localities are also supporting local efforts to preserve and increase housing supply, including zoning changes. The League is also supporting the [Virginia Zoning Atlas](#) as a valuable tool in educating members and the wider community about how zoning and local land use controls are helping or hindering the creation of more affordable housing.

If we want to solve the housing affordability problem in Virginia, we need to educate a wider audience to create more housing champions. What better partner than the League of Women Voters! Please [reach out to your local League](#) and get involved.

Save the Date--LWV-VA Council, June 8, 2024

Council will be virtual this year. This is our "Mini-Convention" where we talk about our accomplishments but, more importantly, our goals and how we want to frame our future. We will have several presentations on our new Youth Council, our project to provide handbooks and training manuals for all League members and some other exciting programs we are planning!



Focus on Local League

LWVs of Northern Virginia Register our Newest Citizens!

- Arina Van Breda

Sometimes our work is truly a team effort as exemplified by the on-going campaign to register new citizens in Northern Virginia. Started in the waning

days of the pandemic in 2022, the effort, led by the LWV of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA), has registered over **6450** new citizens so far! Multiple ceremonies a day are held at the Northern Virginia USCIS Field Office, and it requires as many as 30 volunteers a day to adequately cover these events. To do so, other area Leagues, including the LWVs of Arlington and Alexandria City, Falls Church City, Loudoun and Prince William Counties have stepped up to support the LWVFA. Their members, along with many from the LWVFA, have contributed hundreds of volunteer hours, often starting in the pre-dawn hours, to accomplish this truly team effort. Our reward? We get to welcome our newest citizens to participate in democracy and get smiles and tears of gratitude in return. Talk about an effort that repays in abundance!

Important Dates in April 2024

National Volunteer Month

April 5 - National Black Women's Labor Day

April 6 - National Library Day

April 17 - World Health Day



[Click Here to Support the Work of the League of Women Voters of Virginia](#)

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You are receiving these email notices because you have signed up for membership in the League or asked to receive information from the League.

The League of Women Voters was founded in 1920 when U.S. women won the right to vote. We work to encourage informed and active participation in government and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. The League is dedicated to empowering voters and defending democracy. We are proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public.

For more information, visit the League of Women Voters of Virginia at lwv-va.org and on social media [@lwvva](#) and [@leagueofwomenvoters](#).

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