



**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup>  
OF VIRGINIA

## **The Virginia Voter**

*100+ Years Strong*

League of Women Voters of Virginia  
1011 E. Main Street  
Suite 214A  
Richmond, VA 23219  
United States

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### ***Juneteenth and the Movement of “Contrabands” to Citizens***

For the better part of four decades, I have lived within a few miles of Arlington National Cemetery. It is of both historical and personal interest to me as both of my brothers-in-law are interred there. Arlington became a cemetery on June 15, 1864 by an order of Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. It was seized by Union forces in 1861 and used to protect Washington D.C. during the Civil War. It was formerly the home of Confederate General Robert E Lee, and his wife Mary Custis Lee, daughter of the grandson of Martha Washington.

While the official Cemetery website says the burial of people on the former Lee estate was not a punishment for Robert E Lee, there is enough evidence that some Union generals, especially Montgomery Meigs, a former friend of Lee, was thinking of just that.

From 1863 – 1900, parts of the estate were used as a Freedman’s Village, a refugee camp for newly freed or escaping former slaves.



A little lesser-known fact is that there is an entire section of the Cemetery, Section 27, where almost 3000 former slaves are buried. They were called “contrabands” by the Union Army because they were legally considered property of southern slave-holders and were “confiscated” by the Union Army and not returned south. Originally, the word “contraband” was written on the tombstones. Thankfully, these have all been changed to read either “citizen” or “civilian.”



In addition, Sections 23 and 27, hold the remains of members of the U.S. Colored Troops, then the U.S. government designation for Black Americans who served in segregated regiments

during the Civil War. The headstones for these soldiers include the Civil War shield and the inscription U.S.C.T.

For more information on Black Americans buried at Arlington [visit](#).

Joan

## TEXTBANKING FOR JUNE PRIMARY

With the help of the organizing team of LWV US we will be text banking, young, BIPOC (Black, indigenous and other people of color), voters who have not yet voted in the June primary.

Texting will be open from 5: 30 - 7:30 PM on June 6 - come any time. You will be trained on the League in Action system which is very easy to use - your number will not be seen by any recipients.

[Sign Up Here](#)

## *How Would You Like to Get Out the Vote and Protect Elections?*

- Janet Boyd, Voter Services Chair

With the 2024 General Election drawing near, we would like to learn how we can mobilize voters and protect elections. LWV US can assist us with text banking, phone banking and door-to-door canvassing instructions.

Please complete this brief [Questionnaire](#) as soon as possible to let us know how you might be able to help.

Thank you.

## Calling All Student Members

### Help Combat Mis and Dis-information:

We are embarking on a summer program to combat mis and dis information by producing videos with correct voting information for social media. We are now on TikTok and Snapchat in addition to our usual, Facebook, X, Threads, YouTube, and Instagram. Student members are needed to produce these videos – we have the material; we just need the “stars.”

For more information, email [Joan](#).

Students under 18 will need to sign parental permission forms.

## The League Needs Financial Advice

The LWV-VA board (Treasurer) is looking for guidance from a certified public accountant (CPA), someone who is particularly versed in nonprofit management. This fiscal year the League of Women Voters of Virginia Educational Fund grew. With that growth comes changes to how we file taxes and other fiscal reports. The board is requesting guidance from our membership regarding filing and/or reporting requirements. If you have a background as a CPA or charity/nonprofit fiduciary responsibilities, please contact [Andrienne](#).

## LWV US Convention

LWV Virginia will be represented by four members of the LWV VA Board at Convention this year. The LWV US Convention will take place in Washington, DC from **June 27 – 30**. Our representatives are:

Jane Newell, Director of Strategic Transformation

Andrienne Konstas-Salvette, Treasurer

Alice Tousignant, Program Chair

Joan Porte, President

HELP WANTED AT CONVENTION: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

### Help Wanted:

LWVUS is looking for volunteers from all Maryland and Virginia Leagues and the DC League to support our upcoming Convention. All volunteers will receive complimentary access to all Convention activities (minus Lobby Day and the Saturday dinner) on the day that they volunteer. Plenary access would be a non-voting observer.

If you intend to be a delegate you MUST register and pay. You can still volunteer for non-plenary positions.

Discounted parking will be available.

We thank you for your support and look forward to seeing you in June!

Sign Up [HERE](#).

Convention Location:  
Washington Hilton  
1919 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Washington, DC

# *Virtual Voter Registration for All Members of LWV Virginia, Partners and Individuals Interested in Doing Nonpartisan Voter Registration*

July 13, 2024

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Conducted by the Virginia Board of Elections

This training will satisfy Commonwealth requirements to conduct third party voter registration drives for the period July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

All attendees MUST sign up by July 7, 2024 to receive the zoom link.

[SIGN UP HERE.](#)

\*Effective July 1, 2013, all individuals or organizations requesting twenty-five (25) or more voter registration applications from the Department of Elections (ELECT) or local voter registration office must register for and complete ELECT certified training.



LWV-VA president Joan Porte, and LWVUS Interim CO-CEO Kelly McFarland join members of LWV Fairfax Area League Sonja Scharles, Sidney Johnson and Amy Leeson registering new citizens.

## *How League Initiatives Did in the Recently Passed Virginia Budget*

Lisa Koteen Gerchick and Alice Tousignant

As LWV-VA members know, on Monday, May 13, the General Assembly passed—and Governor Youngkin signed two budget bills—a \$188 billion state budget for the biennium spanning July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2026 and the caboose budget\* updating the previous biennium (2022-2024 (HB6002)).

The headline compromises between the General Assembly and the Governor include a 3% raises for teachers, state employees, and locality employees whose salaries are state-supported, plus an increase in K-12 education funding by over \$2 billion, and limits tuition raises for higher education. It significantly expands the behavioral health system and adds resources for mental health. Regrettably, the agreement leaves Virginia out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, known as RGGI.

On the plus side, \$5 million of those RGGI funds are going to the Low-Income Homeownership Initiative over the biennium. Other good news for the League's Affordable Housing Issue Group is that the base budget for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund increased \$12.5 million per year, from \$75 million to \$87.5 million.

Several items in the 2024-2026 budget affect elections, in addition to standard funding for the Department of Elections. The pay raises mentioned above cover General Registrars and local electoral boards. Federal funds, along with matching funds from the state, will be used to replace VERIS, which is the state's antiquated, creaky voter registration database and election management system, as well as to support the replacement system for several years, while the kinks are ironed out.

The bad news for elections is that funds were deleted that would have paid for reentry into ERIC, the Election Registration Information Center because the Governor vetoed measures requiring Virginia to rejoin that interstate consortium.

Within the so-called caboose budget\*, which modifies the current biennial budget, a tip of the hat to League President Joan Porte, who noticed that the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds had been diverted away from elections. She successfully drummed up support to get those funds reallocated. Now, in the second year of the biennium (i.e., this year), the Department of Elections can distribute \$2.8 million in ARPA funds to localities. Of that, \$324,000 is earmarked for localities that are paper-based and need to implement electronic poll books, while \$2,476,000 is to provide grants to those localities that choose to upgrade and maintain their systems to implement ballot-on-demand systems, which are used mainly in early voting.

**The Budget Process is particularly important, as you see. If you would like the League of Virginia to offer a budget training course so you can be a better advocate for our programs, please complete this [form](#).**

\* A caboose budget is a smaller bill that is an amendment to the previous biennium budget in Virginia. Caboose budgets are necessary when predictions of revenues fall short or are more than what actually occurred. The caboose budget allows for adjustments to appropriations on the previous biennium budget.

## LWV VA Advocacy

The League of Women Voters of Virginia, along with the Fair Elections Center and the Virginia Civic Engagement Table, recently wrote to the Virginia Commissioner of Elections to request that the Virginia Department of Elections update the National Voter Registration Form to reflect that 16-year-old Virginians can pre-register to vote. This law passed in 2019 and has yet to appear on the registration form.

The letter can be found [here](#).



Thank you to LWV Montgomery County for inviting me to their annual meeting. Here is a photo of me and my sister Jean, who accompanied me, speaking with President Gunin Kiran. FYI, my sister Jean once served as New Jersey State Chair of the Junior Women's League.

## What Is an Issue Group?

Issue groups are the backbone of our advocacy program! Issue group members help prepare testimony, present testimony, meet with delegates to discuss and produce legislation and host education programs on our advocacy issues. You don't have to be "expert" in that field, just a desire to learn and contribute to our advocacy program.

This is a great opportunity to be part of the solution! Here are our current Issue Groups –

- Affordable Housing: second Tuesday of the month from 6:00pm to 7:00pm
- Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice: third Friday at 10:00am
- Child Care: second Sunday of the month at 7:30pm
- Domestic Violence and Gun Violence – time TBD
- Education: as needed

- Environment: first Thursday of the month at 6:00pm
- Mis/Dis Information Task Force – third Monday of the month at 7:00pm
- Physical Health Task Force – as needed
- Redistricting: paused
- Reproductive Health: first Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm
- Transparency: forming! fill out the form above to express interest
- Voting & Elections (includes Elections Security, Money in Politics, and Voter Access): second Friday of the month at 3:00pm

You can sign up for one [here](#).

## Affordable Housing Issue Group

### Habitat Virginia Presentation

The LWV-VA Affordable housing Issue Group heard a lively presentation by Overton McGehee, Executive Director of Habitat Virginia, who provided information about what the 37 Habitat affiliates around the state are doing; townhouses and mixed income developments in addition to the traditional one-story cottages.

As you can see [here](#) except for a few rural areas, most of the state is covered. Currently, they serve families with incomes at or below 60% of Area Median income, with 71% of them being People of Color, helping low income families build wealth and attain the American dream.

They will be able to serve more low-income families with the \$5 million that was just added to the budget in RGGI funds which means that all of the homes developed by Habitat affiliates and other non-profit organizations will be energy star rated. If you're interested in learning more, here is a [recording](#) of the meeting.

## News from LWV US

LWV US Partners with the [American Library Association](#).

Advocacy Alerts

Tell Congress to put the [ERA In the Constitution](#).

Support the [John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act](#)

If you believe you received this message in error or wish to no longer receive email from us, please [unsubscribe](#).