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When 3,400 eligible voters were purged from Virginia's voting roles last year by Gov. Glenn Youngkin's administration, the League of Women Voters of Virginia President Joan Porte, sprang into action. She called for an investigation and urged that their rights be restored.

She also criticized the outdated law governing the restoration of voting rights for citizens who have completed their sentences for nonviolent felonies.

"Virginia is the only state to give sole and unfettered control over how and if people get their voting rights restored to the governor," she said. "This system is a tragic holdover from our Jim Crow era laws, and the time is long overdue for this law to be replaced."

Porte said she hopes Virginia voters will see a referendum on the ballot in 2026 to take the power out of the governor's hands.

According to the League of Women Voters' website, the organization protected more than 25 million voters in courts nationally. Porte is doing the work in Virginia, where the League faces significant challenges in protecting voting rights.

Porte majored in political science and landed a job as a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. during the 1980s. She then worked for a political action committee, became disillusioned, and started a corporate travel agency.

However, her passion for civic engagement and voting rights was too strong to ignore.

She joined the Arlington chapter of the League of Women Voters, serving as president and vice president. Last year, she became president of the League of Women Voters of Virginia.

She divided her time between the Arlington chapter of the League of Women Voters and her travel business for years.

Thirty-eight years later, she's still running the travel agency, but not full time.

"It was difficult to juggle both, but it was fun. It never felt like a burden. It was a lot of work," she said. "I loved doing it."

In her semi-retirement, Porte fills her time with other volunteer work. She runs the bed-and-breakfast for the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington and works with the Arlington Food Assistance Center.

Meet an activist with a passion for politics and this week's Personality, Joan Porte:

**Volunteer position:** President, League of Women Voters of Virginia.

**Occupation:** I run a corporate travel agency.

**Date and place of birth:** Oct 26 in Paterson, N.J.

**Where I live now:** Arlington.

**Education:** I have a bachelor's in political science from George Washington University.

**Family:** I have three sisters, a brother who passed away and nieces and nephews.

**League of Women Voters is:** A nonpartisan, grassroots organization working to protect and expand voting rights and ensure everyone is represented in our democracy. We empower voters and defend democracy through advocacy, education and litigation at the local, state and national levels.

**When, why and where founded:** Feb. 14, 1920.

We were founded to register, educate and advocate for the women who were about to receive voting rights with the 19th Amendment.

**League of Women Voters of Virginia was established:** Nov. 10, 1920.

**The 19th Amendment is:** The amendment that granted suffrage to mostly white women in the U.S. People of color were left out until the Civil Rights Act.

**I initially got involved with the League of Women Voters of Virginia:** Because I don't like partisan politics and I wanted to register people to vote. Voting is sacred to me, and I want to promote voting and civics education wherever I can.

**When elected president:** July 1, 2023, through July 1, 2025.

**No. 1 goal or project as president:** To protect and expand voting rights and methods for voting.

**Biggest challenge:** The constant attacks on voting rights and those who feel that voting should be limited and not expanded.

**League of Women Voters is important in the Black community:** Because we want to ensure that all people of color have free and fair access to the polls and are not disenfranchised.

**How League of Women Voters of Virginia plans to get voters to the polls:** Our local leagues are sending more than 5,000 postcards to infrequent voters reminding them to vote. We have done videos of registrars explaining the voting system and next week we'll have a map of all drop boxes on our website.

We have extensive voting information in several languages on our website and distribute materials throughout the Commonwealth. We participate in Vote411.org, which is a one stop shop for nonpartisan voting information in addition to conducting candidate forums throughout the Commonwealth.

**Ways to contact League of Women Voters of Virginia:** Email us at [info@lww-va.org](mailto:info@lww-va.org) or call us at (804)214-6312.

**Upcoming events and details:** Our local leagues are hosting several candidate forums throughout the Commonwealth.

We are having several forums on issues but not until after the election because we're focused on getting out the vote right now.

**Best late-night snack:** Anything with chocolate.

**Top three on my playlist:** Sinatra, Beatles and Mozart.

**A quote that inspires me:** "Everybody counts in applying democracy. And there will never be a true democracy until every responsible and law-abiding adult in it, without regard to race, sex, color or creed has his or her own inalienable and un-purchasable voice in government" — Carrie Chapman Catt.

**Best thing my parents ever taught me:** Get a good education.

**What I'm reading now:** Ha, ha, during election season?

**Next goal:** Sleep – after the election.