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OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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Become a member of the League of Women Voters. The annual membership fee is $50. This payment includes local, state, and national membership dues. Members receive The National Voter, The Virginia Voter, and The Montgomery County Bulletin.
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LWV
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

BULLETIN

Ways To Vote in 2020

Deadline To Register Oct. 13

This year's Nov. 3 presidential election has energized voters but also worried them about how to vote safely and ensure that their vote is counted. What you need to know:

Are you and your family members registered to vote?

You can register or check your registration status easily by going to *vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation*. You can also register in person by going to your local Voter Registration Office. The Montgomery County Voter Registration Office is in the County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St., Christiansburg. In Radford, the Registrar's Office is at 619 Second Street. In Floyd, the office is in the County Courthouse, 100 E. Main St., #302.

Do it now! Deadline to register to vote is Tuesday, Oct. 13.

Elections in the Trump Era

Be part of a zoom audience to hear nationally recognized political analyst Rachel Bitecofer in a Zoom Community Forum on Thursday, Oct. 8, at 7 p.m.

Register to attend the zoom session at bit.ly/LWVMCFallForum.

Bitecofer is a senior fellow at the Niskanen Center in Washington, DC with a specialization in elections. She conducts survey research and

Rachel Bitecofer

President's Message - Beth Obenshain

League supports Constitutional Amendment No. 1

Beth Obenshain

On Nov. 3, Virginians have the opportunity to approve Constitutional Amendment No. 1 to create a citizen-led redistricting commission. It is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to create a more fair and democratic process for selecting Virginia's legislators.

This Constitutional Amendment will end our state's years of gerrymandering and create a transparent process that respects community and geographic boundaries. Legislators will no longer be able to draw rigged district lines to keep one party in power.

The League of Women Voters has advocated for this amendment for more than 30 years.

The amendment has bipartisan support from leaders of both political parties. It will create a commission made up of eight legislators and eight citizens led by a citizen chairperson. Retired judges will select citizens from lists provided by General Assembly leaders from both parties. All meetings and decisions will be open and transparent to the public. No more backroom deals. The ballot question reads:

Should the Constitution of Virginia be amended to establish a redistricting commission, consisting of eight members of the General Assembly and eight citizens of the Commonwealth, that is responsible for drawing the congressional and state legislative districts that will be subsequently voted on, but not changed by, the General Assembly and enacted without the Governor's involvement and to give the responsibility of drawing districts to the Supreme Court of Virginia if the redistricting commission fails to draw districts or the General Assembly fails to enact districts by certain deadlines? **YES/NO**

A "YES" vote supports giving the power to draw legislative and congressional districts to a bipartisan commission of citizens and legislators.

The General Assembly gets to approve the commission's map on an up-or-down vote but may not amend it. The meetings, minutes, and data will be open to the public. This would be the first time in the state's history that citizens would have a voice in the process. The governor cannot veto any plan approved by the General Assembly. If the plan fails, the Supreme Court of Virginia becomes responsible for drawing these election districts.

Some critics have raised concern about the Supreme Court's role, but accompanying legislation requires the court to appoint a citizen special master to draw the maps. The justices are bound by rules of judicial ethics and are appointees of both Democrat- and Republican-controlled legislative chambers.

The amendment also requires lines be drawn in accordance with "laws that address racial and ethnic fairness."

"Let's be clear: This amendment is the only chance Virginia voters have to take control of the map-drawing process from the partisan-controlled legislature for at least the next decade," wrote Bobby Vassar and Wyatt Durrette, the Democratic and Republican co-chairs of the Fair Maps Virginia ballot campaign, in an op-ed in the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

I have recently become handicapped. What are my options for voting early and on Election Day?

Local election sites will include ADA accommodation and curbside voting. For early voting, Montgomery County will have curbside voting at the County Government Center and at the mall satellite site for the entire 45 days. Outside signage with a wireless doorbell will allow a voter to ring for assistance. For early voting in Radford, those who are handicapped or in the "high risk" category can call 540-731-3639 when they arrive at the City Courthouse. In Floyd, drive-up or walk-up curbside voting is available at a tent in the Floyd County Courthouse parking lot. On Election Day, all precinct sites will be handicapped accessible as well as providing voter assistance curbside.

I am worried about my registration status. How do I check that I am registered to vote?

Go to *vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation*. The state site is an excellent source to check on your voter registration or answer general election questions. Radford Registrar Tracy Howard advised that the state online system is very "touchy" and might not find your registration if a single letter or a period is misplaced. He suggested that you call the office number listed to confirm that you are NOT registered before re-registering.

What is the best way for college students to register and vote in case the coronavirus causes colleges to close down and send students home?

Radford Registrar Tracy Howard recommended that the most reliable way to ensure that students are engaged is to have them register to vote on the state site: *vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation*. He encouraged students who have a choice of registration localities to choose their home address and simply vote by mail from their home locality or state. If the student does register locally, he or she should take advantage of in-person early voting beginning Sept. 18. [See local addresses in Question 1 for early voting] If they have already applied for but not received their ballot, they can update the mailing address online at *elections.virginia.gov*. Remember, if you have received a mail-in ballot and decide to vote in person, you MUST vote in the locality where you are registered and turn in your mail-in ballot to election staff when you vote. Students registered to vote in other states must check that state's requirements.

How can I learn more about the candidates on the ballot this November?

Go to *Vote411.org*. This site, created by the League of Women Voters, has information on candidates across the nation as well as information on your voting precinct.

Someone told me absentee ballots are only counted if it is a close race. Is that true?

Absolutely not. All absentee ballots are counted. You should mail your ballot as soon as possible. Ballots postmarked by Election Day are counted as long as they arrive at the Registrar's Office by noon on Friday, Nov. 6, following the election.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the safest way to vote and make sure my vote counts this year with the Covid-19 virus?

Local registrars stress the importance of voting early. One registrar suggested that in-person voting is "safer" than a mail-in ballot if you want to be sure your vote is counted. With early in-person voting beginning Friday, Sept. 18 through Saturday, Oct. 31, voters have the opportunity to walk into the Registrar's Office in Radford or Floyd County or one of Montgomery County's two satellite voting offices and vote without standing in a crowded line. In Montgomery County, the hours for early voting will be 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and Saturdays, Oct. 24 and 31. Montgomery's two satellite voting sites are: Uptown Christiansburg [formerly New River Valley Mall] in the Wonder Universe Children's Museum or at the Montgomery County Government Center Multipurpose Room 1, 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg. Floyd County hours are 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Radford's are 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

I have applied for an absentee ballot, but I do not trust the Post Office to deliver it for me. However, because of the coronavirus, I do not want to go into an election office to deliver it. Will there be drop-off boxes or other options to deposit my ballot?

Yes. The General Assembly approved drop-boxes for ballots. In Montgomery County, ballot drop-boxes will be available at the same dates, times, and locations as in-person early voting at the two satellite voting centers. See above for locations and times. A ballot drop-box will also be in the lobby of the Montgomery County Government Center during normal business hours. Ballot drop boxes will also be available on Election Day, Nov. 3, at each polling site. These sites offer an outside buzzer for voters who need assistance.
In Floyd County, Registrar Amy Ingram is providing curbside voting from your car during early voting and also at polling places on Election Day due to Covid-19.

In Radford, Registrar Tracy Howard is placing a bright red drop-box on the front column of the City Courthouse so voters will not have to enter the building. Radford also provides curbside assistance, but because of staff limitations, only for those who are handicapped or are in the "high risk" category. Voters who need assistance should call 540-731-3639 when they arrive at the city courthouse to request curbside service.

In Floyd County, officials had not decided on locations when this newsletter was prepared.

If I have applied for and received my absentee ballot, can I change my mind and vote in person on Election Day or early voting?

Yes, you can still vote on Election Day or in-person early voting. You must, however, bring your absentee ballot with you and turn it in to the election officials at your polling place or during early voting to prove that you are not voting twice.

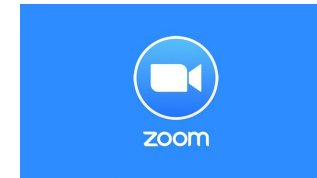# Bitecofer Researches Forecasting Elections

Register for Zoom event at

bit.ly/LWVMCFallForum

elections analysis that has been featured in *The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today* and on NPR.

Her innovative election forecasting model predicted the 2018 midterms five months before Election Day, far ahead of other forecasting methods.

"She has spoken at two statewide League conventions with an enthusiastic response. You may have heard her interviewed on CNN or MSNBC, but this forum will give you a chance to hear the data and reasoning that have led to her interpretations and predictions," said Carolyn Rude, League member who also is active in LLI.

Those who register for the forum will receive an email with the Zoom link a week before the event. The forum is co-sponsored by the Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech, Montgomery County-Radford City-Floyd County Branch of the NAACP, Virginia Tech's Women's and Gender Studies, as well as Tech's Center for the Study of Rhetoric in Society.

Fund Drive

Gifts Make League's Work Possible

Thanks to all who gave this summer.

Mary Jane Zody - in memory of Richard E. Zody
Leslie Hager-Smith – in memory of Lindsay West
Peggy Layne
Susan Terwilliger
Jana Ruble
Elva Miller
Donna McMillen
Susan Anderson
Connie & Mark Froggatt
Alan Raflo
Gunin Kiran
Terry & Ted Smusz
Bobbie & Jim Littlefield
Mary & Charles Houska
Karen Novak – in honor of Harriett Cooper and in memory of Margo Sebba
Necia Evans – in memory of Libby Calvera

Ann Fisher
Carolyn & Don Rude – in honor of Bev Fleming
Ann Groves – in memory of Joan Zajac
Millie Wiggert – in memory of Mary Swiger
Elaine Powers
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Catherine Snyder
Janice Litschert
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Josie Shotts
Susan Goranson
Linda Plaut
Pat Ceperley
Pat Carnrite
Beth Obenshain
Alison Wilson
Jane Hundley
Helen Renqvist – in memory of my mother Shirley Strother
Mary & David Harder – in honor of Joan Munford
Laura Tze & family

Gifts for the Fall Forum

Carolyn and Don Rude
Beth Obenshain

Three Ways To Vote Nov. 3

Early Voting

For the first time, you can vote in person starting 45 days before the election—beginning Friday, Sept. 18 and ending Saturday, Oct. 31.

In Montgomery County, you can vote early at one of two satellite voting sites:

Uptown Christiansburg [formerly New River Valley Mall] in the Wonder Universe Children's Museum or at the Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg, Multipurpose Room 1.

Both sites will be open Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturdays, Oct. 24 and 31. Both locations will be closed on Columbus Day, Monday, Oct. 12.

In Floyd County, early voting is at the General Registrar's Office in the County Courthouse and outside in the courthouse parking lot, Monday - Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

In Radford, early voting is at the General Registrar's Office, Radford City Courthouse, 619 Second St. It will be from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

You will need to show proof of identity, but a photo ID is no longer required for voting. A student ID or a variety of documents such as a current utility bill or bank statement with your name and address will suffice for a voter ID. Curbside voting will be available for handicapped or high-risk voters.

Vote by Mail

You can vote safely from home by mail.

Apply now for your vote-by-mail ballot at *vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation* or at your Registrar's Office. The Montgomery County Registrar's number is 540.382.5741.

Ballots will be mailed starting Sept. 18 with prepaid return postage. Voters this year will NOT need a witness to sign their absentee ballot. **Mail your ballot early!**

You can also use a ballot drop-box. In Montgomery County, ballot drop-boxes will be at the two satellite voting centers on the same dates, times, and locations as in-person early voting. [See locations and times under Early Voting.] A ballot drop-box will also be in the lobby of the Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke St., Christiansburg, during normal business hours. Ballot drop-boxes will also be available on Election Day, Nov. 3, at each polling site.

In Radford, the ballot drop-box will be on the front column of the City Courthouse.

Floyd County is finalizing its plans.

If the ballot is received by Oct. 31 and information on the envelope is incomplete, the registrar will contact the voter and give the person a chance to correct any problem until noon Friday following the election.

Deadline to request an absentee ballot is 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 23.

Voting on Election Day

As always, you can vote on Election Day, Nov 3, from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. at your local precinct. You no longer need a photo ID for voting in Virginia. A student ID or a variety of documents such as a current utility bill or bank statement with your name and address will suffice for an ID. Handicapped access and curbside voting are available at the polls. In Montgomery County, ballot drop boxes will also be available on Election Day, Nov. 3, at each polling site.

For information on election guidelines, go to
elections.virginia.gov

Masks are encouraged at the polls.

For information on candidates, log onto the website
Vote411.org

VOTE! It is your power and your right.

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