
ELECTION POSITION STUDY PART 2

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Available to share with Virginia local Leagues

RANKED CHOICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The study committee recommends that the current LWV-VA Election Laws positions be modified to include:

- Supporting the use of Ranked Choice Voting for local elections, both single- and multi-winner, for those races covered by the 2020 legislation (i.e., county boards of supervisors and city councils).
- Supporting the expanded use of Ranked Choice Voting in primaries
- Supporting implementation of Ranked Choice Voting that allows for all candidates in a race to be ranked.
- Supporting the purchase and use of voting systems on a state-wide and local level that are able to accommodate/adapt to alternative voting systems including Ranked Choice Voting. An example would be the VERIS replacement.
- Supporting use of Ranked Choice Voting beyond local elections, including statewide races such as US Senate, governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general, after RCV Ranked Choice Voting has been shown to improve voter satisfaction in local Virginia elections.

CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE NEED FOR AND THE APPROPRIATE TIMING OF FUTURE STUDIES

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many of the strengths and weaknesses in overall voting administration. However, this is also an opportunity for the LWV (at state and national levels) to reflect deeply on voter access goals and develop new ways to increase voter participation and, more broadly, foster civic engagement. For example, many of the temporary laws passed because of COVID-19 should be considered for permanent legislation and could be considered as *de facto* “pilot programs.” Likewise, an analysis of the funding aspect of those temporary laws can help improve understanding of costs involved in combatting voter suppression. Additionally, as an examination of resources will inevitably arise from such a thoughtful undertaking, including a focus on the difference between equality and equity (i.e., where applicable, resources should be distributed – not equally – but according to need).

ADD A PARAGRAPH/STATEMENT ON VOTER SUPPRESSION TO *POSITIONED FOR ACTION*

LWV-VA positions regarding voter suppression are inferred and not articulated specifically. One way to bring greater focus to reducing voter suppression is to add this paragraph (or one similar) within the Election Laws sections:

Voter Suppression

■ *Voter suppression is best understood as placing a thumb on a scale to either increase the cost of voting or diminish the benefit of voting. Our advocacy will be critical towards actions undertaken to increase voter access and resist efforts to narrow it. As such, use descriptive words and phrases like ‘long waiting times’ or ‘disinformation campaigns’ in lieu of the broad term ‘voter suppression.’ Where necessary, an analysis of costs associated with specific actions that we are endorsing to mitigate voter suppression should be considered and included in advocacy opportunities. Every effort should be made to support Virginia legislators’ endeavors to propose legislation that will establish Voting Rights Act-like measures where they have been diminished at federal levels; specifically, but not limited to, the “preclearance” component. Voter suppression activities will continually change over time; Leagues across the Commonwealth should monitor activities and adapt accordingly.*

Add language about voter suppression throughout *Positioned for Action*

This would allow for voter suppression language to be integrated throughout the existing document.

RIGHTS OF FELONS IN VIRGINIA

Existing Position:

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that:

- The civil rights of felons in Virginia should be restored automatically either upon release from incarceration or upon completion of probation and parole.
- The procedure should be identical for all felons, regardless of the nature of their crime.
- The process should be easy to understand, accessible, transparent and fair.
- Information about the process should be available to felons, the justice and corrections system and the general public. (2009)

Add

- *A constitutional amendment and enabling legislation should be pursued to guarantee that future administrations continue a rights restoration process as developed and implemented starting in 2016.*

BARRIERS TO VOTER REGISTRATION

Existing position under Role of the Commonwealth:

- Funding the cost of maintaining a statewide system of voter registration and providing equal and easy access for voting throughout Virginia, are responsibilities shared by the Commonwealth and local governments. The Commonwealth should provide additional funding where localities are financially unable to support an accessible and well-managed election system.
- The Department of Elections (ELECT) and the State Board of Elections (SBE) must be given adequate authority and resources to: enforce election laws and mandatory standards for local election offices; encourage best practices in registration and elections management, especially in training election officers and officials; provide adequate oversight of registration and elections at locality and precinct levels; and oversee implementation of election laws, regulations and policies to ensure their consistent application across the Commonwealth. (2015)

Add

- *...and combat disinformation that can be used as a voter suppression tactic*

PURGES OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Existing position under Registration:

- Because the system of voter registration affects voter turnout, and because federal legislation has extended the availability and ease of voter registration in Virginia,
 - Voter registration opportunities must be available, by mail and in person, consistently throughout the Commonwealth;
 - A uniform system of voter registration is required to facilitate voting and prevent fraud; and
 - Additional measures should be adopted to increase the availability of voter registration, especially those that utilize technological advances or provide cost savings, including:
 - Online voter registration,
 - Reducing the interval between the registration deadline and Election Day to the smallest number of days consistent with effective elections management, and
 - Same-day registration at county and city central election offices.

Add

Care should be taken to ensure that the maintenance of voter rolls does not result in purges of eligible voters or other voter suppression.

AT THE POLLS: LONG LINES AND EQUIPMENT

Existing position under At the Polls:

The following should be required throughout Virginia to ensure an efficient voting process:

- Electronic poll books, with back-up paper copies for emergencies;
- Appropriate precinct sizes and numbers of voting machines to minimize *voting delays*;
- Well-trained officers of election; and
- Polling places selected to maximize voter participation and near public transportation, wherever possible.

■

Replace “voting delays” with:

- *wait times which can result in voter disenfranchisement*