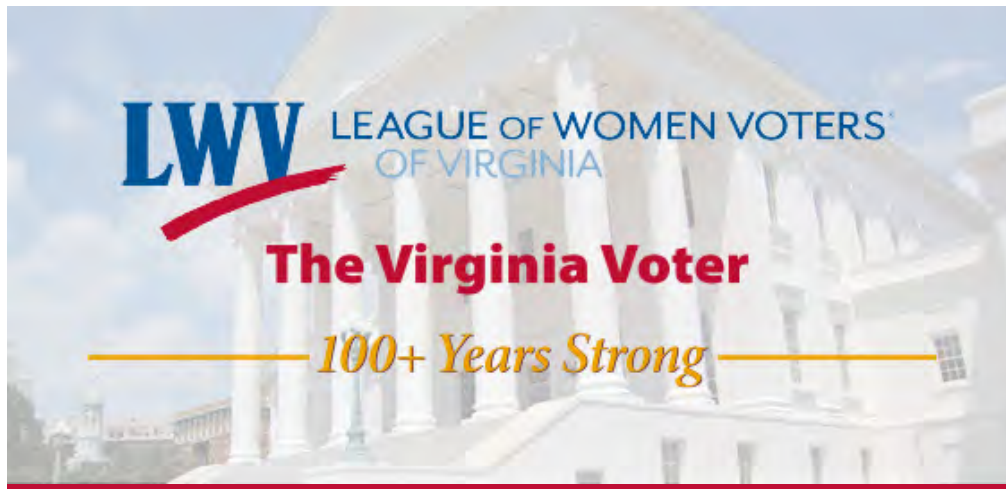


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March 2024 | Vol. 71 No. 9



President's Message

Welcome to Women's History Month!

- Joan Porte, President, LWV-VA

While it didn't become an official national month honoring the achievements of women until 1987, it had its beginnings in 1911 with the first International Women's Day. Now, that day is celebrated on March 8.

However, International Women's Day was largely forgotten until 1969 when an activist known as Linda X, organized a march in Berkeley, California and then assisted with the creation of The Women's History Research Center. This began a 20-year push to get women "more than one day."

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter, issued a proclamation naming the week of March 8 a "women's week." Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Rep Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland) co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution proclaiming a Women's History Week in 1981. Finally, after being petitioned by the National Women's History Alliance, Congress passed the law proclaiming March as Women's History Month in 1987. Since 1988, presidents have issued annual proclamations designating the month of March as Women's History Month.

Be sure to RSVP for LWV Virginia's celebration of this month with a screening of "Invisible Warriors: African American Women in World War II" on March 20. More information is below.

Thanks for all you do.

Joan



Invisible Warriors

The LWV of Virginia Presents a Special Screening of the Documentary "Invisible Warriors: African American Women and World War II"

March 20, 2024 - 7 PM

Spend an evening with Gregory S. Cooke, producer, and director of the Documentary “ Invisible Warriors, African American Women and World War II.” Mr. Cooke will introduce the film and give us perspective on the contribution of these women.

“Invisible Warriors” tells the important story of women who have been ignored for too long due to their race, gender, and class. African American “Rosie the Riveters” highlight the resilience, tenacity, dedication, and pride of a people, with lessons that transcend the barriers between us and that resonate today.”

- Amber Mitchell, Asst. Director of Public Engagement, The National World War II Museum.

Gregory S. Cooke has dedicated his career as an educator and historian to help relocate African Americans to the main pages of history. Invisible Warriors is his directorial debut following a successful stint as Associate Director of “Choc’late Soldiers from the USA.”

RSVP here: <https://LWVVAInvisibleWarriors.eventbrite.com>

To defray costs, we are asking for a \$5 tax deductible donation.

Every vote counts--and is counted

Contest Judges Needed

A League Poster Contest for Middle and High School Students

The Mis/Dis Information Task Force will soon be launching a contest that will invite middle and high school age students in Virginia to create informative and attractive posters about the importance of voting, the need to cast an informed vote, the security of votes and the accuracy of vote counting. Awards will be made for winning posters, which will be used to educate students and voters for the fall election.

Judging of posters will be done mostly during July, and we need your help! As a judge, you will be provided with digital photos of posters students submit and asked, via email, to provide your rating of each on its content accuracy, originality, artistic expression and visual power. You do not need to be an artist or civics teacher to be a judge – we need a variety of League members to pool their skills and knowledge. We will check the submissions for election accuracy.

Please volunteer to be a judge by sending an email to Terry Newell [here](#)



LWV-VA Advocacy

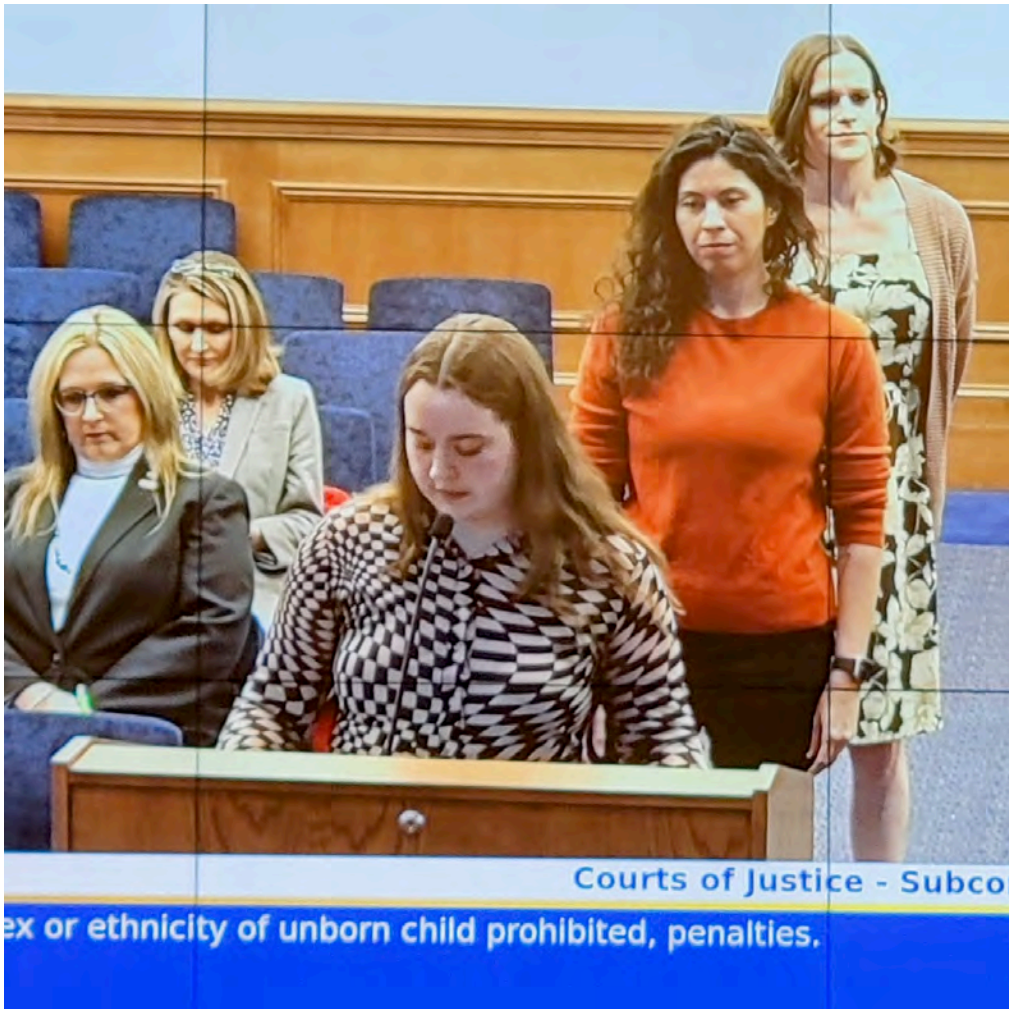
League Day

This year's League Day was actually League Day & 1/2, starting with a reception the night before at the Omni. Senator Angelia Williams Graves, Delegates Karen Keys-Gamarra, Kannen Srinivasan and Marty Martinez, as well as staff from the offices of Senator Barbara Favola and Delegate Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, all stopped by to chat.

The next day started early with a full breakfast and a line-up of wonderful speakers, both from the General Assembly and from partner organizations including Chris Piper, the Virginia Public Access Project, Senator Russet Perry (District 31), Megan Ryne, Virginia Coalition For Open Government, Jamie Lockhart, Planned Parenthood, Matthew Schweich, National Popular Vote, and Lexi White, ReproRising, all of whom spoke about their issue. Fully armed with facts, the 60 League members attending went to meetings with their legislators. Meanwhile, the League was honored on the floor of the House and Senate by proclamations introduced by Delegate Vivian Watts and Senator Barbara Favola, respectively.

Our work is not done! Please continue to monitor the bills affecting your issue. All of our testimony is updated weekly on our new website - <https://my.lwv.org/virginia/advocacy/testimony-2024>

Stay tuned for more advocacy alerts – past ones are also on the website <https://my.lwv.org/virginia/advocacy/advocacy-alerts>



LWV-VA Advocacy

Homestretch at the General Assembly

- Denise Harrington

We are coming to the end of our General Assembly session. Our Advocacy engagement efforts from our Issue Group leaders and members have been mostly successful for this session.

First, the Budget Amendment to stop the “claw back” of money for elections is still alive. While it is not the original one that gave the money to early voting, the Senate version of the Budget contains \$2.8 million of the ARPA money for upgrading electronic polling books and ballot on demand machines.

The Budget passed both houses on Feb 22 and as soon as we know who the conferees are (the people who will blend the two together for final passage) we will send out an advocacy alert to keep this money. Stay tuned.

Here is a brief snapshot of other bills that have passed both houses and will go to the Governor.

Voting and Elections - Our Voting and Election team was in the trenches in the effort to stop bills to limit the days for early voting, and institute onerous voter laws designed to make voting more restricting. We are carefully watching Senator Van Valkenburg’s bill to reinstate Virginia’s membership in ERIC (Electronic Registration Information Center) and efforts to keep ERIC alive in the budget.

We were disappointed that ranked choice voting bills and so many good campaign finance reforms were not passed or, in some cases, even heard. The fight continues.

Reproductive Health - We were on the forefront of stopping the criminalization of patients and healthcare providers, protecting women’s privacy with their menstrual cycles, stopping extradition of healthcare providers; and supporting contraception to all individuals.

Environment - Although there was a great enthusiasm about putting some “guardrails on data centers,” much of the legislation was killed. However, with so much awareness about the issue raised in this session, legislation will return the next session. Attempts to roll back the clean air car emissions were stopped.

Gun Violence/Domestic Violence Prevention -Virginia will have an assault weapon ban; secure storage guidelines for the home, some regulation for ghost guns, and “red flag laws” that help close the boyfriend loophole,” if the governor signs these bills.

Criminal and Behavioral Health - As of the day of this article, Second Look legislation is headed to the full committee and is expected to pass. Second Look enables people convicted of nonviolent crimes, who have served a large portion of their sentence to petition for early release if they have met several requirements.

Education - All bills that attempted to divert funds from children and public education have been stopped, and more funding became the norm, not the exception. Thus, the following bills have advanced: raising teacher salaries to the national average; funding community schools, improving the ratio for school counselors and more.

Housing - Bills to decrease evictions and support affordable housing are also advancing, and we are keeping our eyes on budget amendments to support affordable housing.

Childcare - Bills to support a child tax credit for working families, mixed delivery, and to make childcare more accessible and affordable are advancing as well.

Partner Organizations

More than Luncheons and Teas, Black Sororities are Leading Change in Our Communities

- *Krysta Jones, LWV-VA Membership Director*

Learn more about the historically Black sororities serving in Virginia! Click on the link to find a chapter near you. The League is partnering with these remarkable women, as in the Arlington high school voter registration event, pictured above.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated ® (AKA) was founded on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1908. It is the oldest Greek-letter organization established by African American college-educated women. AKA is comprised of more than 355,000 initiated members in graduate and undergraduate chapters located in 12 countries. AKA is building on their rich legacy of service by galvanizing their sisterhood to lead on the front lines of change, education, and advocacy. <https://aka1908.com/midatlantic/history/mid-atlantic-region-graduate-chapters/>

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated was founded 111 years ago on January 13, 1913, by 22 young women studying at Howard University. They sought to create an organization rooted in sisterhood, scholarship, service, and social action, and their Founders' first act of public service was participating in the Suffrage March of 1913. Today, they have blossomed into more than those twenty-two courageous women could have imagined, with over 350,000 initiated women and over 1,000 chapters located worldwide.

<https://www.dstsouthatlanticregion.org/virginia>

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated was founded on January 16, 1920, at Howard University, Washington, D.C. The Klan was active during this period, and their Founders were determined to start a sisterhood that did not allow socializing and elitism to overshadow the real mission of progressive organizations-to address societal ills. Today, with over 125,000 initiated college-educated women, Zeta women represent diverse professions ranging from elected officials to educators. <https://www.cwvirginiazetas.org/>

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. was organized on November 12, 1922, in Indianapolis, Indiana, by seven young educators. Since its inception, the dynamic women of Sigma Gamma Rho have built and sustained a well-known and well-respected reputation for leading positive change to help uplift the community through sisterhood, leadership, and service. Sigma Gamma Rho has welcomed more than 100,000 collegiate and professional women from every profession. The sorority has more than 500 chapters.

<https://www.sgrhoneregion.org/nerchapterlocator>



The Right to Vote

Voting and Women

- *Right to Vote Study*

Could women vote in Virginia before the ratification of the 19th Amendment? At a city level? County level? State? Federal level?

Not at any level.

Between 1912 and 1916 the Virginia General Assembly voted three times on bills to amend the Virginia Constitution to allow women to vote. Did any of the bills pass in the General Assembly?

Not one.

When did Virginia ratify the 19th Amendment which granted the right to vote to women? In 1919? Between 1920 and 1930? Later? Never?

1952. Both houses of the Virginia General Assembly rejected the 19th Amendment on 2/12/1920. More than thirty years later, the Virginia Legislature ratified it on 2/21/1952.

What state was the first to ratify the 19th Amendment and what state the last?

Illinois (6/10/1919) and Mississippi (3/22/1984)

What suffragist and League leader marches at the Virginia Women's Monument?

Adèle Clark <https://www.virginia.org/listing/virginia-womens-monument/4832/>

Where in Virginia were the suffragists who protested in front of the White House imprisoned?

Occoquan Workhouse <https://www.nps.gov/places/occoquan-workhouse.htm>

Restoring the Right to Vote

- *Elizabeth Beyer, USA Today*

Shawn Barksdale lost his right to vote before he was even old enough to cast a ballot.

When he was 17 years old and living in South Boston, Virginia, Barksdale was convicted of a felony in 1994 for selling cocaine and sentenced to Barrett Juvenile Correction Center for one year.

"I ran in the streets," he said. "I turned 18 inside of that juvenile system."

Barksdale, now 47, said that losing the right to vote at such a young age made him angry and without a voice.

“My mindset was, ‘My vote doesn’t count anyway,’” he said. “I really didn’t understand the right, the power of voting.”

Continue reading here: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2024/02/20/supreme-court-diversity-policy-thomas-jefferson/71847618007/>

Shawn has been featured on our Podcast “Confessions from the Voting Booth” be sure to catch all of our podcasts here:

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



Transparency and Environment

Sunshine Week is March 10-16, 2024: The League Moves Forward on the Transparency Issue

- Carolyn Caywood, Transparency & Environment Coordinator

Last June at our Convention, the League of Women Voters of Virginia adopted a resolution, Transparency Is a Key Tenet of Good Government.

Our connection with transparency is not new, however. When the League of Women Voters of Virginia helped found the [Virginia Coalition for Open Government](#), many operations of government were deliberately opaque. The efforts of good government organizations combined with new technologies have made great improvements. Now you can sign up for notifications of

many official meetings and watch them deliberate. You can get daily announcements of the Governor's schedule. The [Legislative Information System](#) and the [Virginia Regulatory Town Hall](#) try to help the public understand the workings of government and have opportunities to give input.

Still, there is a natural tendency for officials to default to secrecy. It isn't necessarily that officials are up to no good. Reluctance to explain professional matters to lay persons or fear of being seen making a mistake can cause an official to avoid openness. That's human nature and it is why we need a strong Freedom of Information Act.

That is why LWV VA has started a Transparency Task Force – we need to keep moving the transparency ball further down the field.

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act § 2.2-3700 begins, "By enacting this chapter, the General Assembly ensures the people of the Commonwealth ready access to public records in the custody of a public body or its officers and employees, and free entry to meetings of public bodies wherein the business of the people is being conducted. The affairs of government are not intended to be conducted in an atmosphere of secrecy since at all times the public is to be the beneficiary of any action taken at any level of government."

Since 1968 when Virginia's FOIA was enacted, it has been amended many times with a growing list of exceptions. Some protect the privacy of individual citizens, but some seem to just be barriers to public scrutiny. Mis- and Disinformation about election officials has reached the level that protecting their addresses has been proposed by [HB943](#).

The law requires government to respond to a FOIA request within a set time and to charge only the cost of providing the requested information. Wrangling over exemptions sometimes takes court intervention to pry the information loose. We have been fortunate that news organizations have been willing to sue when necessary.

Sometimes government agencies charge "fees that often appear either exorbitant or irrational," in the words of Delegate Batten whose resolution [HJ54](#) would have had the FOIA Advisory Council study the actual costs. Senator Roem's [SB324](#) approached FOIA charges from a different angle and passed the Senate.

The other part of FOIA is open meetings. The League recognizes the importance of being able to observe the meetings of public bodies with our [Observer Corps](#). But how is that affected if the meeting is virtual or hybrid? [SB734](#) if passed, will slightly expand the virtual meetings allowable in a year. What if some committee members can only participate online? If they pass, [SB85](#) and [HB1040](#) will allow persons with disabilities and caregivers who

cannot attend meetings in person to still be counted toward a quorum of voting members.

The legislation considered in this 2024 General Assembly Session shows that there are FOIA questions where the League should have a voice. However, that means we need a team to track legislation, write testimony, and follow the issues.

Will you be one of the League members who takes up this challenge? If so sign up on our Issue Group [form](#).

Partner Organization - Associated Press

Election Day Voter Turnout Pilot Project

- Reid Magney, Associated Press

If you are planning to vote on Election Day for the Presidential Primary on Super Tuesday, March 5 (or if you are working at the polls), please sign up to volunteer. It's easy to do and will only take a few minutes of your time. You'll be helping the Associated Press provide faster and more accurate results on Election Night.

You can sign up by sending an [email](#) to the AP with your name, your county, and your precinct location to the project. I will confirm your participation and send you detailed instructions shortly before the election. Here's a sneak peek:

- When you vote on Election Day, make sure you ask the poll worker what number voter you were (i.e., you were the 250th voter so far today).
- Also, remember exactly what time you voted.
- After you vote on Election Day, report that information to the AP's Election Call Center at the toll-free number you will be provided. Tell them your name, the name of your county and precinct, the time you voted, and your voter number.
- If you are working at the polls on Election Day, you can call the AP a few times throughout the day and provide the number of voters so far at your precinct.
- That's all!

The information you share about voting will help the AP refine its voter turnout data models throughout the day before the polls close. That helps them know how far along they are in tabulation after polls close and helps with accurate and timely race calls.

You might ask why the AP can't get this turnout information directly from Virginia counties. Most county election offices do not have any process in place to collect turnout information during the day from precincts. They're focused on counting ballots after the polls close. That's why the AP asked to partner with the League on this project.

The League of Women Voters and the Associated Press share many of the same values. We're both independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit and fact-based organizations. We hope you will consider participating in this research project designed to improve Election Night report.

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 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!

Important Dates in March 2024

Women's History Month

March 8 - International Women's Day

March 10 - 16 - Sunshine Week

March 12 - Equal Pay Day

March 20 - Invisible Warriors

March 31 - Transgender Day of Visibility



[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 lww-va.org and on social media @lwwva and @leagueofwomenvoters.

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League of Women Voters of Virginia
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Suite 214A
Richmond, VA 23219

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