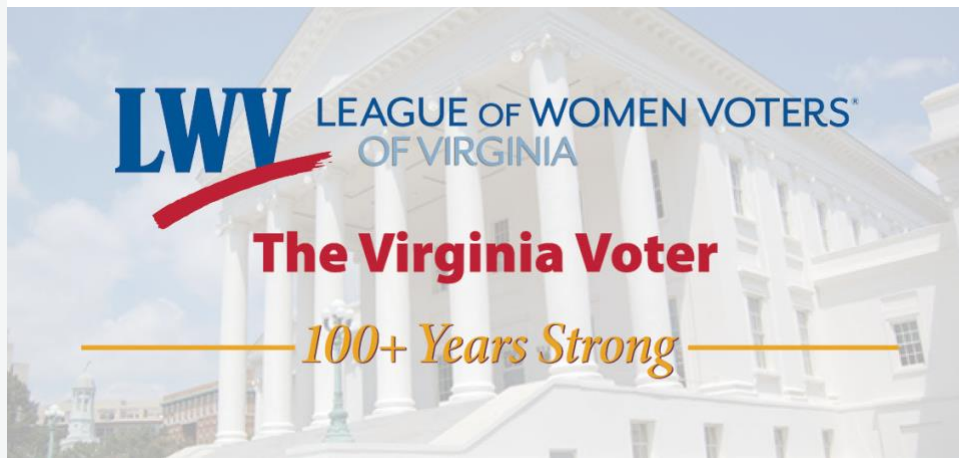


## Protecting Democracy: Grassroots Action



League of Women Voters of Virginia  
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United States

**May 2025 | Vol. 73 No. 10**

### **President's Message**

A few years ago, I read the book, “The Bad Ass Librarians of Timbuktu,” a story of librarians fighting to save 350,000 sacred manuscripts from the encroaching Taliban. It reminded me of a book I had read earlier, “Saved for Humanity: The Hermitage during the Siege of Leningrad” when starving librarians and artists removed some art works and then set out to hide the rest from the Nazis. Ok, I am a sucker for a good adventure story and stories about courage in the face of daunting odds.

These books returned to my consciousness when I read about the directive to purge from museums and libraries all information that spoke of historic events that weak people fear. The story of the Tuskegee Airmen, the Code Talkers, and the stories of other great women, Black and Indigenous People.

Then came the Executive Order gutting money for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a major source of funding for all but especially rural libraries.

Right now, in America, we have scientists and librarians doing what their historical counterparts did – archiving, saving, storing online stories that are being destroyed.

What can you do to help this generation of “bad ass librarians?” First, support your local library. You can also support or get a Little Free Library at your house. I love mine; it not only is a great exchange of information, but you get to meet and talk to neighbors that you might not see otherwise.

If there is a rural library near you, call them to see how you can help with books, money, or volunteering. If you have a local museum in your area, do the same. Volunteering an hour can help them enormously.

Strategies to preserve and continue knowledge come in different ways for each generation. Each of us has a chance to rise to the occasion – every action, even if we think it small, is a help.

Thanks for all you do.

Joan

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## **Every Breath You Take**

LWVUS joined a [statement](#) opposing the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) plan to eliminate air quality standards for smog, soot, and mercury, and limits on carbon pollution and coal waste.

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## **Asian American, Native American, & Pacific Islander Heritage Month**

***Asian American, Native American, & Pacific Islander Heritage Month  
May 1–31, 2025***

*The LWV-VA DEI Committee invites all League members to take part in commemorating Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. This month provides a valuable opportunity to celebrate the contributions, history, and resilience of these communities, especially considering recent federal actions that threaten to diminish or erase this legacy.*

*Thanks to Chris DeRosa for this in-depth report.*

*Chris DeRosa, LWV of Arlington & Alexandria City*

The passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870 stated that the right to vote should not be “denied or abridged” “on account of race, color, ...or previous servitude.” African American men were eligible to vote,

but women were excluded. In 1920, with the passage of the 19th Amendment, **some** American women were able to vote. The amendment stated that "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." It did not grant the right to vote to women – states managed to find other ways to keep many citizens from voting – for many, disenfranchisement lasted for decades.

Asian Americans, like many other minority groups throughout history, have faced hurdles in their pursuit of the "Great American Dream". They struggled for decades before acquiring the right to full citizenship and voting.

It began soon after the founding of our young nation. In 1790, Congress passed the Naturalization Act of 1790, which restricted citizenship to "any alien, being a free white person".

In 1898, the Supreme Court ruled (in *U.S. v Wong Kim Ark*) that the 14th Amendment guaranteed birthright citizenship to anyone born in the United States, even if their parents were not citizens. But this case did not address the issue of naturalization.

Immigrants from Asia faced many obstacles created by immigration and citizenship laws. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act barred immigration from China (with a few exceptions) for 10 years and barred foreign-born Chinese from citizenship. When it expired in 1892, it was replaced by the Geary Act, which barred courts from granting citizenship to Chinese immigrants. The Geary Act was made permanent in 1902.

In 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court (*Takeo Ozawa v. U.S.*) upheld that the plaintiff was not eligible for citizenship because he was not a

"free white person *or* alien of African nativity"; the Court further defined "white" as "what is popularly known as the Caucasian race."

Later, in 1924, Congress passed the Immigration Exclusion Act, barring all immigrants who would not be eligible for citizenship – this now applied to immigrants from Japan and other Asian-Pacific nations.

Efforts were also made to strip U.S. citizenship from persons who married immigrants who were not eligible for citizenship. Congress passed the Cable Act of 1922, which ruled that women who married such “aliens” “shall cease to be an American citizen."

These exclusion acts were finally repealed after World War II, though strict immigration quotas remained.

In 1946, immigrants from India were granted the right to naturalized citizenship. Six years later, the McCarran-Walter Act eliminated laws that prevented Asian immigrants from applying for citizenship. Finally, in 1965, the Voting Rights Act was signed into law – it expanded voting rights for Asian Americans and others including African American women.

Now, more than ever, as our voting rights are being threatened, it is imperative that we, the League of Women Voters, **defend democracy!**

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## EVENTS



### **Come to Convention**

June 13 – 15, 2025

Fredericksburg Convention Center,  
2371 Carl D Silver Pkwy,  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

**Theme:** Women Elect and Be Elected

The last day to get a room in the room block is May 20 - the last day to register is June 2.

[More information here.](#)

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### **Pre-Convention Zoom Meetings**

Delegates should attend, but these are open to all LWW VA members.

All recordings of these events will be placed on the [website when available.](#)

May 14, 6:30 - 8:00 PM

Program: Review of Right to Vote Study and a proposed study to update our "Women's Rights" Position

[RSVP](#)

May 20 - 7:00 - 8:00 PM

By Laws: Review of Proposed By Law Changes

[RSVP](#)

May 21- 7:00 - 8:00 PM

Budget: Review of Proposed FY 26 Budget

[RSVP](#)

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**From the DEI Committee - "Silent Witness Project"**

**May 17 – *Silent Witness Project* Presentation (Zoom)**

We invite all League members to attend a special Zoom presentation of *The Silent Witness Project* on **Friday, May 17 at 11:00 AM (EST)**.

The presentation is approximately 90 minutes and is a moving tribute to the lives and experiences of enslaved people in Lynchburg, Virginia.

- **Silent Witnesses, Inc.** is an independent nonprofit founded by the Legacy Museum of African American History and the Lynchburg Museum System. It is the first comprehensive study of slavery in Lynchburg and works to preserve and share the history of African-descended people in the region.

- A special thank-you to **Sue Stengel** of the Lynchburg League for initiating this meaningful partnership.

Following the broadcast, several DEI Committee members will take a guided tour of the **Legacy Museum of African American History** in Lynchburg, and we welcome others to join.

Contact [Evette Barton for more information on the Lynchburg Tour.](#)

Learn more at: <https://silentwitnesses.org>

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## **Tour of Black History Museum and Culture Center**

**June 7 10 AM**

In celebration of Juneteenth, the LWV-VA DEI Committee in partnership with the LWV of the Richmond Metro Area DEI Committee is sponsoring a guided tour at the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia at 122 W. Leigh Street in historic



Jackson Ward in Richmond on Saturday, June 7th from 10 am to 11:30am.

The tour includes all the permanent exhibits with topics, such as emancipation, reconstruction, Jim Crow, Brown v Board, massive resistance, Civil Rights, Richmond 34/Woolworth's Cafe, Leigh St. Armory Building, 35-foot timeline of Black history facts. Also tour the “Bodies of Labor: Hands That Built A Nation” – Virginian artists exhibition interpreting the theme of Black people in the labor force throughout the years.

Registration is required with a \$10 admittance fee. Don't wait to sign up, as the guided tour is limited to thirty people.

Parking is available on St. Peter's or Leigh Streets, as well as at Ebenezer Baptist Church across the street. Plan to eat lunch after the tour at one of the many restaurants in Jackson Ward.

[RSVP](#)

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### **New Member Orientation Training - May 29**

May 29, 2025 – 7 – 8:30 PM

[RSVP](#)

Getting new members involved, interested and excited about being part of the League is critical to membership retention. Join two veteran "on-boarders", Carol Stephens (Richmond Metro) and Judy Helein (Fairfax Area) for a training session on how best to welcome new members into the "World of League."

This is open to all LWV Virginia members – whether you are a membership chair, or potential chair or are just interested in making our league more welcoming! It is a virtual event

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### **Virginia Poverty Law Center Webinar on Immigrant Rights**

May 6, 1PM - virtual

Confusion and fear around "public charge" have kept many immigrant families from staying enrolled in, using, and applying for vital benefits like Medicaid, FAMIS, Marketplace Insurance, SNAP, and School Meals. Join Eleanor Sullivan, Medicaid Policy Analyst and Enroll Virginia Navigator at Virginia Poverty Law Center (VPLC), for a clear and timely breakdown of what public charge really means in 2025.

Learn who it applies to, the specific benefits impacted by the rule, and how to communicate accurate information to the communities you serve. This session will dispel myths, share historical context, and equip advocates, navigators, and community partners with trusted resources to support immigrant families as they navigate a challenging immigration landscape.

[Register](#)

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### **UNITE AND RISE 8.5**

Starting May 1, the League will mobilize [8.5 MILLION VOTERS](#) using the power of voter engagement as a cornerstone of our democracy.

Unite and Rise 8.5 will showcase the many ways voters can drive change, including through advocacy, mobilization, civic education, and engagement.

Now is the time to [JOIN US](#) in our fight to save Democracy.

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### **LWV Response to Arrest of Judge Dugan**

The League of Women Voters responded to the arrest of Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Dugan.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

April 25, 2025

Contact: Adam Ginsburg

(914) 481-7053

[media@lwv.org](mailto:media@lwv.org)

### **Terrifying, Unacceptable and Dangerous**

**Washington, DC** — On April 25, 2025, federal agents arrested Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Hannah Dugan at her courthouse for allegedly obstructing the unlawful arrest of Eduardo Flores-Ruiz. In response, the **League of Women Voters CEO Celina Stewart** released the following statement:

“Make no mistake: the targeting of Judge Dugan is terrifying, unacceptable, and dangerous. Federal agents arresting a sitting

state court judge undermines the sanctity of the judiciary and threatens us all.

"Amid an alarming intensification of the targeting of noncitizens by this administration, this act is a clear attempt to silence and intimidate anyone who stands up for the rights of noncitizens. Today's action creates a chilling ripple effect that erodes faith in institutions meant to protect and serve us all.

"In this incredibly divisive and dangerous moment, it is up to all of us — no matter our political leaning — to fight for our neighbors, our communities, and the vision of the country we want to live in."

LWV Wisconsin issued a [joint statement with other civil liberties groups](#).

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### **Getting Ready for the June Primary**

On our [website](#) you can find 2025 Election Information for the June 17 primary and the Nov 4 general election translated into Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, Filipino, Korean and Vietnamese. Partners feel free to download and print out.

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### **We Need Stories of People Who Might be Harmed by the SAVE Act.**

We need your help! As you know, the League is pushing back against the *Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act*, which would require citizenship documentation to register to vote even though voters in every state are already required to affirm or verify their

citizenship status when registering. The *SAVE Act* would create one more barrier to the voting process, as many eligible voters do not have easy access to the necessary documents.

We are looking for stories of League members and others who could be impacted by the *SAVE Act*. Their stories can help us show how this law would harm voters.

We want to hear from any member (or voter) who is a US Citizen and fits the following criteria:

They lack easy access to documentary proof of citizenship (no valid passport or birth certificate) OR

Married/divorced women whose documents do not reflect correct current names

Trans individuals whose documents do not reflect their current names

Older people who don't have access to citizenship documents

Lower income people who do not have and can't pay for citizenship documents

People who may have lost documents in floods or fires

They have a physical limitation that will make it challenging to travel and present documentary proof of citizenship to their local election office in person.

Someone homebound or with a physical disability

Someone in a care facility or institution (including prison for states that allow voting)

Someone in a rural area very far away from an election office

Also, anyone who is:

Not yet registered to vote OR

High school students

Young voters

New Americans

Likely to (or could) move in the future.

Renters

College Students

Retirees

Low Income voters

Federal Workers

Please email Joan if you or someone you know can share their story and thanks for all you do.

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### **Analysis of Voting Executive Order and Save Act**

On our website we have an [analysis](#) of the Executive Order on Voting vs the Save Act.

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### **The Future I Asked For**

#### ***A poem by Youth Council Member Phoebe Scarborough***

This is not the future I asked for.

Have we forgotten

everything we knew?

Why we believed

Have we forgotten

Our humanity?

Why we believed

In gratitude and goodness.

Our humanity

Overrun with hate.

Gratitude and goodness;

Now greed and glory.

Overrun with hate.

Pushing people away.

Now greed and glory

Are all that we know

Pushing people away,

technology and the media

Are all that we know.

It can only get worse.

Technology and the media

Controlling our every move.

It can only get worse,  
And what about the Earth?

Controlling our every move;  
The wealthy in power.  
And what about the Earth?  
Remember when we put others first?

The wealthy in power  
Have lost all perspective  
Remember when we put others first?  
The future I asked for

This is not it.  
This is not only about me  
But we have lost all our empathy.  
Why we believed.

I speak for those who cannot.  
The future we asked for  
Is not this.

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**LOCAL LEAGUES GRASS ROOTS ACTION**

**LWV of Northern Shenandoah Valley says Hands Off!**



On April 5, hundreds of people in Winchester marched to say Hands Off our Rights! The Northern Shenandoah Valley League organized the march. *Photo by the Winchester Star.*



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### Meanwhile in Washington County

The Washington County League also supported Democracy on April 5. Go, Leaguers! That is Co President LWV Washington County, Jane Hill, on the left with her sister Jean.



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## **LWV Washington County: Demo Voting Booths into Schools**

*DeeDee Goldsmith*

In Southwest Virginia, the LWV of Washington County (LWVWC) is working with our school system to help new voters become more comfortable when they vote for the first time. Studies have shown that familiarizing students with the actual voting process helps diminish their hesitancy to vote when they become eligible voters. So, in a collaborative effort between the superintendent's office, the teachers, the voter registrar, the electoral board, and the League of Women Voters, we are looking into using actual county voting machines for student government elections.

The superintendent of schools is excited to bring such an authentic and relevant experience to high school students. As a former

member of the LWV-WC, he is committed to helping students become engaged citizens as voters by demystifying the voting process and alleviating any reluctance they may feel as new voters.

We are still very early on in the process, so our fingers are crossed that we'll be able to make this happen in time for student elections in the Spring of 2026. Our superintendent is as excited about the project as we are. There is precedent nationwide but in Virginia, this would be a first.

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### **LWV South Hampton Roads Raises Alarm about "Save Act"**

LWV South Hampton Roads President, Judith Evans Brown, was published in the "Virginia Pilot" warning of the [Save Act](#).

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### **LWV Williamsburg Area Joins Partners to Secure Needed Baby Supplies**

The LWV of the Williamsburg Area joined the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Birth in Color and the James City-Williamsburg NAACP to collect baby shower donations.



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## LWV Charlottesville Area Promoting National Popular Vote!

National Popular Voter Community Dialogue at the local TomTom Festival. From the right Ellie Syverud, Jane Newell, (LWV VA Board) and Charlottesville President, Lisa Hilgartner.





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**Donate to the League of Women Voters of Virginia**

There has never been a better time to [DONATE TO LWV VIRGINIA!](#)

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### **May 2025 Calendar**

May 1 – Law Day

May 26 – Memorial Day

Memorial Day honors those who died in military service, while Veterans Day honors all those who served, both living and deceased, in the US military.

[unsubscribe](#)