

League of Women Voters of Virginia
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President's Message

The General Assembly is in full swing, and it is going to be a busy year.

As you can see from the pictures below, LWV Virginia was all over Richmond during the second week in session participating in Democracy Day, the Virginia Center for Public Safety MLK Day rally and testifying. We also had people doing remote testimony. Follow our testimony on the website [here](#).

This is in addition to our weekly informative Women's Legislative Roundtables (WLRTs). For any WLRTs you may have missed go to our You Tube page [here](#).

With the passage of the three Constitutional amendments that we have been supporting--Reproductive Freedom, Marriage Equality and Right to Vote--we will have a good deal of work ahead to educate the public in time for the November elections. So, our issue groups need you now more than ever. Join an Issue Group if you want to be more involved in legislation and education. Click [here](#).

Thanks for all you do!

Joan

P.S. I am pleased to announce that our friends at ACLU Virginia won a historic case this week challenging Virginia's disenfranchising of voters in violation of the 1876 Readmission Act. Because of this many people convicted of felonies not on the original list in this Act will get their voting rights back.

Now comes the work of reaching these people, some who may still be in jails and prisons. The League has pledged our support to the ACLU and our partners in the Right to Vote Coalition for this project.

[Read more about the case here.](#)

Do You Vote By Mail? Are You Worried About the New Postal Rules?

Patricia Wirth

President LWV of the Northern Shenandoah Valley

Voting by mail is a safe, secure and accessible way to vote that has been used in the United States for more than 150 years.

On December 24, 2025, the United States Postal Service (USPS) published revisions to the Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) regarding USPS's policies and operations related to the use of postmarks, prompting questions about how these revisions may affect mail-in voting.

USPS confirmed there were no changes to any USPS policy related to the treatment and delivery of Ballot Mail. It is longstanding USPS policy to treat all Ballot Mail as First-Class Mail, regardless of its actual paid mail class, and to endeavor to postmark every return ballot mailed by a voter.

When and how mail is postmarked has significant implications for elections — particularly in states and localities that conduct their elections entirely or primarily by mail. In 16 states including Virginia and the District of Columbia, mailed ballots can be counted if they are received by a deadline set after Election Day — but only if they are postmarked on or before Election Day. In Virginia it is by 12P on the 3rd day after election (although there is legislation supported by the League to extend that deadline to 5p.)

Consolidation of mail processing centers across the country makes it more common that postmarks may not necessarily reflect the date that USPS took possession of a mail piece. Richmond, VA, has experienced this problem.

The USPS continues to recommend that voters who plan to vote by mail send their ballots at least seven to ten days before Election Day (or at least one week before the final receipt date in states with post-Election Day deadlines) to ensure timely receipt by election officials. Sending in your ballot early also ensures that ballots can be

delivered to election offices on time in states where ballots must be received by Election Day to be counted.

Voters who want to ensure that their Ballot Mail is postmarked on the date it is received by USPS may go to any post office or other USPS retail location and request a manual postmark free of charge. You can also put your mail-in ballot in the Drop Box at your main Office of Elections.

Black History Is American History—and It Should Not Be Erased LWVVA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee | Black History Month

Evette Barton, Chair

Black History Month remains central to the American story. From the nation's founding to ongoing efforts for inclusion, Black Americans have shaped the country's institutions, economy, culture, and civic ideals. Advocates warn that minimizing or erasing Black history distorts the nation's shared truth.\

The League of Women Voters of Virginia maintains that an informed electorate is essential to sustaining democracy. Telling America's full story—including slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and current struggles for equity—strengthens civic trust and participation. A study by the National Council for Social Studies (2018) indicates that presenting history in an inclusive and accurate fashion improves critical thinking abilities and fosters civic engagement.

This year's observance echoes the warning issued nearly a century ago by historian and educator Carter G. Woodson, whose seminal work *The Miseducation of the Negro* (1933) argued that suppressing Black history undermines democracy itself. Woodson asserted that when people are denied truthful knowledge of their past, they are more easily excluded from full participation in

civic life. His scholarship remains deeply relevant as renewed challenges emerge around teaching honest history in schools and public institutions. Additional research reinforces these concerns. A study published by the American Educational Research Association found that students exposed to culturally inclusive curricula demonstrate higher levels of civic engagement, empathy, and democratic participation (Dee & Penner, 2017).

The National Museum of African American History and Culture similarly emphasize that understanding Black history provides essential context for understanding American democracy, inequality, and progress (NMAAHC, 2021).

For the LWVVA DEI Committee, Black History Month is both a celebration and a call to action. Committee members stress that safeguarding democracy requires defending the truth, promoting inclusive education, and resisting efforts to erase or sanitize the past. Black history is essential, not divisive. To know it is to know America more fully.

As the month is observed across Virginia, the League reaffirms its commitment to equity, education, and democratic integrity. Black history is American history—and it must be taught, protected, and remembered.

References

- Dee, T. S., & Penner, E. K. (2017). The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence from an Ethnic Studies Curriculum. American Educational Research Association.
 - National Council for Social Studies. (2018). Research on inclusive history education.
 - National Museum of African American History and Culture. (2021). Educational resources on African American history.
 - Woodson, C. G. (1933). *The MisEducation of the Negro*. Washington, DC: Associated Publishers.
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The Need for Activism

Carolyn Caywood, LWV South Hampton Roads, Member LWV VA DEI Committee

In his Second Inaugural Address, Barack Obama said, *“We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall.”*

By connecting these three great movements for liberty and justice, President Obama identified a cornerstone of what it means to be American. We the people are activists, continually pushing this nation “to rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed.” (1) The very first amendment to our Constitution guarantees us the tools – free speech and free assembly.

These movements found new ways to protest inequality and injustice. The Suffrage movement pioneered the mass march on Washington and picketing the White House. We remember Selma for the courage of non-violent marchers in the face of brutality. To demonstrate barriers, activists for passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act left wheelchairs to crawl up the steps of the Capitol. “When I made it to the top, I was exhausted and my elbows and knees were bleeding... Climbing those steps was symbolic of how badly the disability community wanted the ADA to get passed,” said Larry Biondi. (2)

Other rights movements – for Chicanos, American Indians, Asian Americans, and more – have learned from each other and supported each other. Women’s suffrage grew out of the movement to abolish slavery. Brown v. Board of Education cited the 1947 case Mendez v. Westminster that ended segregated schools for Mexican children in California. Bayard Rustin, the angelic troublemaker who organized the 1963 March on Washington said, “You have to join every other movement for the freedom of people.” (3)

In his book, *Across That Bridge: Life Lessons and a Vision for Change*, John Lewis reminded us, “Freedom is not a state; it is an

act. It is not some enchanted garden perched high on a distant plateau where we can finally sit down and rest. Freedom is the continuous action we all must take, and each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society.”

Abolitionist and suffragist Lucretia Mott said, “Any great change must expect opposition, because it shakes the very foundation of privilege.” (4)

Time and again, we have seen American activists overcome opposition, so we know, as Dolores Huerta says, “Sí, se puede,” **yes, we can.**(5)

1. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. *March on Washington*, 1963.
2. *An Oral History of the Capitol Crawl*, 2020.
3. *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, 2015.
4. *Lucretia Mott Speaks: The Essential Speeches and Sermons*, 2017.
5. Dolores Huerta: “Sí, se puede!” National Archives, 2023.

In Memorium - Lulu Meese



We have just learned of the passing of former LWV Virginia President, Lulu Meese. Lulu was a warrior for women's rights and served as President of the League of Women Voters of Virginia three times: 1975-1979, 1995-1997, and 2005-2007. Our sympathies to her daughter, grandchild and great grandchildren. You may read her obituary [here](#).

LWV-US

Following intervention by the League of Women Voters of California on behalf of voters, a federal court dismissed the DOJ lawsuit seeking California's full, unredacted voter registration

data. This is a significant victory for voters, including many of our members, and we are closely monitoring similar litigation in other states.

LWVUS submitted comments to EPA opposing changing the definition of "Waters of the United States." Read them [here](#)

LWVUS joined comments to DHS opposing Public Charge Proposed Rule. Read them [here](#).

[League of Women Voters, ACLU, Broad Coalition Urge Supreme Court to Reject Novel Reading of "Election Day" Statutes that Would Disenfranchise Mail Voters](#)

[LWV Joins LULAC and Common Cause in Calling for Congressional Investigation Into Recent Federal Immigration Enforcement Actions](#)

LWV-VA



Your League has been testifying on a near-daily basis regarding a number of bills in or out of alignment with our positions. Above, Mary Crutchfield is testifying at Senate Privileges and Elections Committee for LWV VA. Below, Joan testifying in opposition to cutting early voting to only ten days before an election. Barbara Boardman, MD, our Advocacy Chair, testifying for gun safety legislation.





LWV-VA at an anti-ICE rally in Arlington



LWV-VA in Richmond at Democracy Day!



LWV-VA at a gun violence rally held at the Virginia Center for Public Safety



Pres. Joan Porte speaking at the UpVote Ranked Choice Voting reception

LOCAL LEAGUES

LWV Richmond Metro Protesting ICE Hanover Concentration Camp

We are distressed to learn that ICE is planning a "detention center" AKA concentration camp in Ashland. Our Richmond Metro League will be speaking out against this and LWV VA Board Member Jane Newell, joined fellow Richmond Metro member at a protest outside the facility.

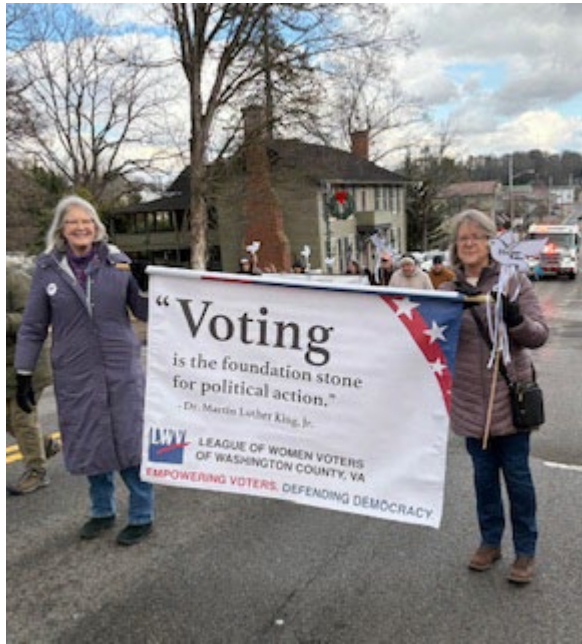
Anyone in Richmond Metro or surrounding areas, contact the presidents of LWV RM!



LWV Falls Church Making Blankets for Immigrant Children

LWV Falls Church is participating in [Operation Welcome Blanket](#). Falls Church members will meet today to get materials. Contact [Liza for information](#).

LWV Washington County on MLK Day



LWV Washington County member Dede Goldsmith and her sister, Nel Stubbs in the MLK Day Parade

LWV Loudoun County on MLK Day



LWV-Loudon at their MLK Day Parade

LWV Staunton, Augusta County and Waynesboro - in the news

Great recognition of one of our newest leagues! Read it [here](#).

Upcoming LWV Events--Check These Out!

Feb 4, 7 PM **Pre League Day Talking Points Review -**

RSVP [here](#)

Feb 4, 7:15 PM The League of Women Voters of Central Delaware County is having a zoom meeting on "Immigration and Healthcare.

[RSVP](#)

Feb 10 - 11- **League Day** with reception on Feb 10. RSVP [here - deadline is Feb 2](#)

March 18 - 7 PM, online LWV-VA DEI Committee Webinar Series
Continues With **Challenges and Controversies to Voting Rights**

As part of our Women & Democracy Webinar Series for Women's History Month, the LWV-VA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is proud to present an important and timely conversation: "Challenges and Controversies to Voting Rights."

Our Speaker is Dr. Kimberly S. Adams. Dr Adams is an accomplished political scientist and activist with more than 20 years of experience in academia and the private sector. She received her B.S. and M.S. from the University of Southern Mississippi and her Ph.D. from the University of Mississippi. She currently serves as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science at Roger Williams University, where she teaches and researches across a wide range of political subjects.

Her academic and professional expertise spans:

- American Government
- Women and Politics
- Campaigns and Elections
- Political Communication
- The Legislative Process
- American Political Parties
- Racial and Ethnic Politics

Voting rights remain a cornerstone of American democracy, yet they continue to face legal, structural and institutional roadblocks that disproportionately affect women, communities of color, young voters, and marginalized groups. This session will explore the evolving landscape of voting access, the forces shaping current debates, and the implications for equitable participation in our democracy.

RSVP [here](#)

February 2025 Calendar

Black History Month

Feb 1 – National Freedom from Slavery Day

Feb 4 - Rosa Parks Day

Feb 11 – International Day of Women and Girls in Service

Feb 14 – LWV US Birthday –

Feb 16 - President's Day

Feb 25 African American Scientist and Inventor Day

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