

The logo for the League of Women Voters of Virginia. It features the letters 'LWV' in a large, bold, blue font. To the right of 'LWV', the words 'LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS' are stacked above 'OF VIRGINIA' in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. A red brushstroke underline is positioned beneath the 'LWV' letters. The background of the entire page is a faded image of the Virginia State Capitol building.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF VIRGINIA

The Virginia Voter

100+ Years Strong

League of Women Voters of Virginia
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Richmond, VA 23219
United States

May 2026 Vol. 74 No. 11

President's Message

Happy May. This may be an unusual message, but I want to talk about Council. As seasoned members know, during even numbered years LWV US has a convention and state leagues hold a council and odd numbered years, the reverse happens.

I have attended four LWV US Council meetings since joining the LWV VA Board and have noticed they never have a plenary session. These Council meetings are always directed at training. There are no formal sessions at all. However, the LWV Virginia Councils are practically mini-Conventions and quite formal. I did some digging and noticed that yes, we are a bit out of step with other leagues.

Which brings me to Council 2026. We will have to have a bit of a plenary to discuss the budget – however, we hope to amend the bylaws at our 2027 State Convention to be held June 4 -6, 2027 in Roanoke to eliminate that need in the future. However, that will be all the plenary work we do! The rest will be dedicated to training.

LWV VA Council will be held virtually on June 6, 2026, from 9 A – 12 P. After a brief plenary from 9a – 9:30 AM we will then hold training for any LWV VA member who is interested. Please only sign up as a delegate if informed by your local President or unit leader. However, anyone can sign up as a guest to attend training.

9:00 AM - Plenary Begins - budget review

9:30 AM - "How to Motivate Members" conducted by Nile Blass, LWV US organizer

10:30 AM - Break

10:45 - 11:45 AM – “Best Practices for Optimum League Operation,” by me.

Again, anyone who is interested can attend but please use the line marked “guest” if coming for training only.

Here is the [RSVP](#)

See you at Council and thanks for all you do.

Joan

P.S. See information on our proposed ICE Task Force AND fundraiser from our Youth Council for period products.

Concerned About the Actions of ICE? Would You Like to Be a Part of Solution

Jane Newell, LWV VA Board

A new Issue Group is forming! We need help to research, to inform local Leagues, and to identify positions of the LWV and state government concerning the creation of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention camps and other ICE and DHS activity.

Leaguers have already joined with the community that ended the sale of a warehouse in Ashland, Virginia, to the Department of Homeland Security for use as an ICE detention center. We need to be vigilant throughout Virginia.

If interested in joining this newly forming Issue Group please contact [Jane Newell](#)

We Are Also Looking to Build Our Events Committee

The 2027 Convention will be upon us soon and planning needs to start soon. If you want to help out with speakers and breakouts please contact our event coordinator [Fran Eckenrode](#).

Youth Council Fundraiser for Menstrual Products

Keep Girls in School Even if They Can't Afford Period Products

Uma Raju

A student-proposed period product fundraiser will take place this spring to address period poverty across Virginia. The initiative plans

to raise funds for nonprofit organizations serving the Greater Richmond area, Fredericksburg, Northern Virginia, and other regions by providing access to menstrual care.

Menstrual products are often overlooked as a fundamental necessity, and period poverty runs rampant in areas where accessing even basic resources is a struggle. This disproportionately impacts women and girls across Virginia. With 1 out of 7 Virginian girls living below the poverty line, these expensive and scarce products are nearly inaccessible in schools and the workforce.

Studies have shown that a lack of period products leads to chronic absenteeism, where menstruators can miss up to a week of school every month, deeply inhibiting their education. Women in the workforce face barriers as well, as missing shifts due to a lack of period supplies makes them more vulnerable to job loss. Period poverty has displayed itself as a consistent barrier to equality, as 50% of the population lacks access to essentials.

Period poverty is a widely stigmatized issue, but it must not be neglected. By supporting this effort, participants can help promote health, dignity, and, most importantly, equal opportunity for women and girls in school and the workforce. Even small contributions can make an extremely meaningful impact on a person's life.

NOTE: Virginia has a law that requires school districts to provide period products, but it has never been funded! We will be advocating for funding in 2027.

In the meantime, please make your tax-deductible donation [HERE](#).

Thank you.

May is Asian/Pacific American Month



Who was Wong Kim Ark?

Chris DeRosa, LWW/Arlington-Alexandria City

If you, like me, listened to the arguments in front of the Supreme Court of the U.S. about birthright citizenship on April 1st, you may have heard the name, Wong Kim Ark, mentioned several times. Who

was Wong Kim Ark? And why is he important to the discussion about birthright citizenship?

On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14160. This EO attempted to redefine birthright citizenship by denying citizenship to children who are born to undocumented immigrants or those who are in the U.S. on a temporary basis (e.g., travel visas, work permits or student visas). It directed federal agencies to NOT assign social security numbers to these children or issue passports to them. This EO is not being enforced at this time due to federal court rulings and pending court trials. The US Supreme Court is expected to issue its ruling on Trump vs Barbara later this year.

So, who was Wong Kim Ark?

Wong Kim Ark was born in the 1870s to Chinese immigrants who had moved to San Francisco. His parents were not citizens – in fact, they could NOT become citizens due to the Naturalization Act of 1795 and the Naturalization Law of 1802. When he was a child, his parents took him back to China. He returned with an uncle a few years later. In 1889, he

returned to China again to marry Yee Shee. He returned to San Francisco again in 1890 and worked as a cook. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers to the U.S., so he could not bring his wife and son to the U.S. to live with him. In 1894, Wong Kim Ark went to visit with his family again and returned to the U.S. the next year. This time he was denied entry to the U.S. by a federal official who declared that he was not a U.S. citizen.

Wong Kim Ark filed suit in federal court to be recognized as a U.S. citizen. On January 3, 1896, Judge Morrow declared that Wong Kim Ark was, indeed, a U.S. citizen by birth. The government appealed

and the case was brought before the U.S. Supreme Court which ruled in favor of Wong Kim Ark in 1898. The ruling confirmed that a child born in the United States of “alien parents” was, indeed, a citizen.

The ruling is reflected in Section One of the 14th Amendment, which was passed by Congress in June 1866, and ratified by the states two years later. Section One reads: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Today, we await the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in Trump vs. Barbara. Will the justices affirm the ruling issued in the Wong Kim Ark decision of 1898?

Sources

<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/169us649>

<https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/supreme-court-case-library/united-states-v-wong-kim-ark-1898>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_v._Wong_Kim_Ark

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/169/649>

DC Statehood NOW!

We had a showing of "The Last Battlefront" - by our friends from LWV District of Columbia. If you missed it don't worry - it will be on PBS

soon. However, there is something you can do right now to help get DC Statehood over the line.

See attached for information on how you can get involved [DC Home Rule](#).

"Silent Witness: Slavery in Lynchburg"



LWV-VA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee members visit the Legacy Museum of African American History in Lynchburg.

BEARING WITNESS: WHY THIS HISTORY STILL MATTERS

Evette Barton, DEI Chair

Listen to the recording about “Silent Witness: The Legacy Museum of African American History [here](#).

There are moments when history moves beyond the page—and becomes something you feel. That was my experience visiting the Legacy Museum of African American History with the League of Women Voters of Virginia DEI Committee, followed by our Silent Witnesses Project webinar.

As Sue Stengel shared:

“Days before the Zoom, LWV-VA DEI members met presenters Ramona Battle and David Neumeyer in Lynchburg for a museum tour. We then stood at a plaque marking the site of a former slave market—Lynchburg once ranked second to Richmond in its enslaved population.”

Walking through that history—inside the museum and on the very ground where it happened—was a powerful reminder: this truth is not distant. It is local. It is present. And it is ours to acknowledge.

What stayed with me most were the advertisements—real notices listing children. Boys and girls, as young as 10, are reduced to property. I had to pause. At that moment, it was no longer “then.” It

was human. It was real. The advertisements—actual notices selling children—left the strongest impression on me.

Seeing the image of Ota Benga offered another stark reminder. Taken from the Congo in 1904 and displayed in the monkey house at the Bronx Zoo, his story reflects a painful history of dehumanization that cannot be ignored.

More than a century later, the killing of George Floyd forced the nation to confront a continuing truth: harm—especially toward Black bodies—has not disappeared. It has evolved, and it demands our attention. The Silent Witnesses Project is the first comprehensive effort to document the history of slavery in Lynchburg. Six markers now stand across the city—with more to come—each one, a quiet but unyielding reminder of what once stood in plain sight.

This is the work: to make visible what was once ignored. Not to assign blame, but to tell the truth—fully and honestly. Because when we avoid the truth, we risk repeating harm in new forms.

A National Perspective

Karen Nelson, a League member from Wisconsin who attended the Zoom presentation, shared this reflection:

The Silent Witnesses presentation was an engaging and thorough look at this important public history project. Presenters Ramona Battle and David Neumeyer clearly conveyed the mission to document and preserve sites connected to the enslaved experience in Lynchburg in a way that was both informative and accessible.

The virtual format allowed viewers to connect with this vital local history from anywhere. I also recommend Dr. Joy DeGruy's *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* for deeper context on the lasting impacts of enslavement."

— Karen Nelson, EMBA, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Consultant, LWVMC (Wisconsin)

As DEI Chair, I believe this work is not about revisiting pain for its own sake. It is about honoring lives that were overlooked, misrepresented, or erased—and ensuring their stories are told with dignity and truth.

Reflection Highlight

"In that moment, it was no longer history—it was human. Children were not seen as children, but as property. And once you truly see that, you cannot look away."

We owe that to them.
And we owe that to ourselves.

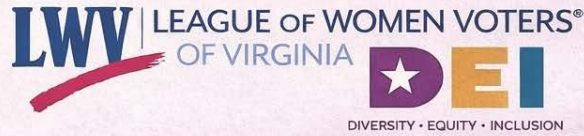
Because once you bear witness, you cannot un-know what you've seen.

EVENTS

Rescheduled "Challenges and Controversies in Voting Rights

May 6, 7 - 8 PM. This was rescheduled due to technical difficulties.

RSVP



LWV-VA DEI Women's Webinar Series

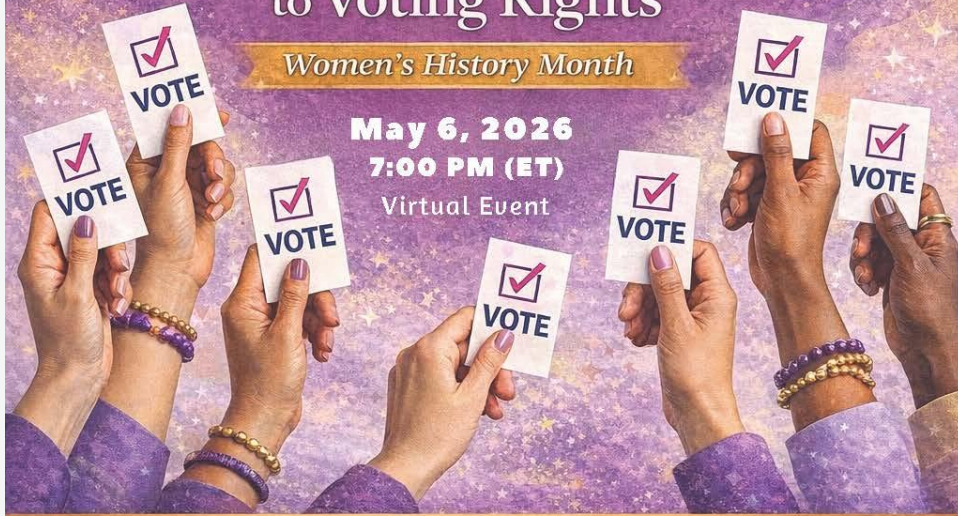
Challenges & Controversies to Voting Rights

Women's History Month

May 6, 2026

7:00 PM (ET)

Virtual Event



**Join us for an important conversation on
the evolving challenges to voting rights in United States.**

This webinar will feature a nationally respected political scientist and voting rights advocate with more than two decades of experience examining the intersections of democracy, race, gender, and public policy. * * * *

Our guest brings deep expertise in conflict resolution, civic engagement, and voter access issues. * * * *

✓ **Registration Required • All Are Welcome**

League of Women Voters of Virginia
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee

To register & attend, Scan QR code
or visit link: bit.ly/4ILSAiA



Repro Rights Kick Off, May 16

Our push to educate the public on the Reproductive Rights Constitutional Amendment kicks off on **May 16 in Richmond at 12p.**

Use the QR code below to register - more details will follow.

Let's get this across the goal line in November!!

VIRGINIANS FOR REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM • CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

JOIN US MAY 16

Richmond, Virginia
12:00pm
RSVP for more details!



[TINYURL.COM/LWVREPRO](https://tinyurl.com/LWVREPRO)

BE A PART OF HISTORY.

The campaign to put reproductive freedom in Virginia's Constitution is beginning.



Budget 101 With Finance Chair Delegate Vivian Watts

May 18, 7p - virtual

Budget 101 for Chair of House Finance Committee and LWV Member Vivian Watts. If you want to know anything about how the "sausage is made" with the Virginia Budget, this is for you!

[RSVP](#)

**August 8, 2026: Unite and Rise for Voting Rights - First Planning
May 4, 5:00 PM Eastern**

LWV US Mobilization - "Unite and Rise for Voting Rights" Find out details [here](#).

Field Call - May 4 at 5p Eastern

LWV is hosting a virtual field call on the Voting Rights Day of Action and the many ways leagues can engage and build power this summer. The call will introduce the Day of Action framework, walk through activation options, and preview the June workshop series that will equip leagues with the tools to succeed, including support for deep canvassing, people's hearings, cross-movement advocacy days, voter registration drives, faith/community roundtables, town halls, and phonebanks.

The call will cover:

The Day of Action framework and what league participation could look like on the ground

A full walkthrough of the official activation menu and planning toolkit

A preview of the June workshop series, which will provide hands-on training and organizing support across a range of action types:

Deep canvassing

People's hearings

Cross-movement advocacy days

Voter registration drives

Faith & community roundtables

Town halls

Phonebanks

[RSVP FOR THE CALL HERE.](#)

Calling All Librarians, or Library Friendly Leaguers For the American Library Association Convention - Oct 2026

As we have for the past two years, we are being asked to exhibit at the Virginia Library Association Annual Conference which will be held **Oct 18 - 20, 2026 at the Norfolk Hilton Hotel, Norfolk.**

We happen to have several librarians in the South Hampton Roads League but this is a long, busy conference so we need more people to take shifts staffing the table.

You don't have to be a librarian, of course, but want to have the joy of interacting with these really smart, tough people who join is in our desire to protect free speech and the freedom of thought. If you are in the area and can take a shift please contact Joan.

Thanks

Member Portal Training

Member Portal Training

A lot has changed since the launch of the LWV Member Portal on February 1, 2025 and a lot has changed since portal training was offered in 2024. LWV is offering a three-part training series on May 28, June 4, and June 11 at 4–5 pm ET for League leaders (new and old). Member registration is required!

The Membership Chair/Roster Manager training will cover joining and renewing, as well as navigating the LWV portal and updating the roster. This webinar is helpful for roster managers, membership chairs, and any leader who wants more guidance on using the portal. Click [here](#) to register.

The Treasurer training will cover Stripe, offline payments, League-paid dues, the new Finances screen, the process of making Leagues

whole, and the remainder of the PMP cycle. This training is open to any League leader, particularly those who deal with finances. Click [here](#) to register.

The Optional Portal Tools training will focus on using the email tool and the website editor within the portal. This tutorial is for Leagues that are using or considering using the portal emailer or website editor. Click [HERE](#) to register.

Save the Date: June 4 - 6, 2027 LWV VA Convention - Roanoke Virginia Theme: Democracy in Full Color

LWV US NEWS

LWV US Responds to Supreme Court Gutting the Voting Rights Act

The LWV US response to the Supreme Court decision to destroy protections of the Voting Rights Act can be found [here](#).

Voting Rights Groups Challenge Executive Order on Mail In Ballots

A coalition of Voting Rights Groups, including the LWV of Massachusetts, filed suit against President Trump's executive order regarding mail-in ballots and building a database of U.S. citizens, both moves that could disenfranchise thousands of voters. Click [here](#) to read more.

A Win for Voter Rights at the Missouri Supreme Court

In March, the Missouri Supreme Court upheld a ruling blocking four unlawful anti-voter provisions from going into effect that would have

chilled the critical work of civic engagement groups. Following this ruling, nonpartisan civic engagement groups in the state can continue exercising their right to engage in political speech by helping Missourians register to vote — without the threat of harsh criminal sanctions. To find out more, click [here](#).

LWV-US Writes to Congress

LWV-US joined a [letter](#) to Congress supporting free public education for children regardless of immigration status. They also joined a [letter](#) urging lawmakers to overturn a Department of Veterans Affairs abortion ban.

LWV-VA NEWS

Victory: Virginia Stops Illegal Voter Purges

In case you missed it! The Commonwealth of Virginia agreed to stop illegal purges of voters started by Gov. Youngkin's Executive Order. The lawsuit brought by the Virginia Coalition of Immigrant Rights, African Communities Together and LWV Virginia was settled in our favor!

[Press release is here.](#)

LWV Virginia Signs onto Letter to the US Dept. of Justice

LWV Virginia signed onto a letter with other members of the Virginia Civic Engagement Table to learn how much voting information has been given to the Dept of Justice.

[See the letter here.](#)

LOCAL LEAGUES

LWV Fredericksburg Area - Sponsors Rappahannock Art Festival! May 2



Congratulations to LWV Fredericksburg Area for using Unite and Rise money to host a Arts and Music Festival to bring groups together!

LWV Williamsburg Area Hosts Public Forum



Linda Rice, left, moderated a public forum with Del. Jessica Anderson and Del. Mark Downey, and encouraged the audience to pose questions to the lawmakers. (Ben Swenson/For The Virginia Gazette) To read the whole article, click [here](#).

LWV SAW Voter Reg at Mary Baldwin U



The League of Women Voters of Staunton, Augusta, and Waynesboro (LWV-SAW) proudly partnered with Student Engagement at Mary Baldwin University to support voter registration and civic engagement.

Girl Scouts Earn Democracy Badge with Support from LWV Loudoun



In April, LWV Loudoun members **Patty Waschitzki** (chair) and **Susan Jones**, together with long-time Girl Scout leader **Kathy Deffer**, led an engaging afternoon program—months in the making—for **36 Loudoun Girl Scouts** working toward their *Democracy* badge.

The team created a series of activities introducing the girls to local, state, and federal government. Highlights included conversations with elected officials, hands-on exercises exploring how government functions, and a special visit to the Loudoun Board of Supervisors' public meeting room.

This event was sponsored through the Unite and Rise Grant. LWV-Loudoun extends special thanks to Fran at LWV-Richmond and Joan at the state level for providing tote bags filled with League materials, each girl's own copy of the U.S. Constitution, and a Virginia House of Delegates Activity Book to take home.

How to Increase Young Adult Voter Turnout

A recent study by Drs. Jennifer Victor and Tim Bynion published in "Social Science Quarterly" shows an increase of 11 percent turnout when college students receive in person presentations on voting than those who do not receive none.

A huge shout out to the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area that sponsors an active college unit at George Mason and led many of these in-person presentations!

You can read the study [here](#).

May 2026 Calendar

Asian Pacific Heritage Month

May 1 – Law Day*

May 1 - May Day - International Workers Day

May 10 - Mother's Day

May 3 - World Press Freedom Day

May 25 - Memorial Day

*Law Day is a national day set aside to celebrate the rule of law. It was established as a day of national dedication to the principles of government under law by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1958. Congress established May 1 as the official date to celebrate each year. Law Day provides an opportunity to understand how law and the legal process protect our liberty, strive to achieve justice, and contribute to the freedoms that all Americans share.

[unsubscribe](#)
