

Idèle Goodman Clark statue



Capitol Square, Richmond

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



Empowering voters. Defending democracy.

<https://www.lwv-rva.org/>

From the President



Jane Newell
LWV Richmond Metro President

I would choose two words to describe our efforts this past year: **Emerge** and **Engage**. The pandemic taught us to use new technology to support our mission of *Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy*. This year our members engaged through technology with statewide issue groups to discuss, analyze and develop testimony on state legislation affecting our mission.

They joined studies on topics as diverse as Money in Politics and Environmental Justice. An online membership survey helped us identify where member's interests intersected with issue groups, studies, and local League committees. Online orientations engaged our newest members in the mission of the League at all levels.

We emerged to hold over twenty in-person registration drives and voter education opportunities at farmers markets, flea markets, vaccination centers, universities, and festivals. Our civics education team was able to return to the classroom to help students register and become educated voters.

We engaged to meet our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals through an online presentation by Elvatrice Parker Belsches, author of *Richmond Virginia: Black History Series*, and an in-person presentation on Critical Race Theory by Dr. Grace Gipson.

We engaged with our local community through observing at meetings of our local electoral boards. We advocated for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) before Richmond's City Council.

In May we emerged for our first in-person Annual Meeting since 2019 at beautiful Agecroft Hall, where our members approved an increase in dues for the first time in a decade. Our financial reports show that we continue to be healthy and thriving. This annual report describes an organization that engages locally and statewide to support the League's mission in our community.

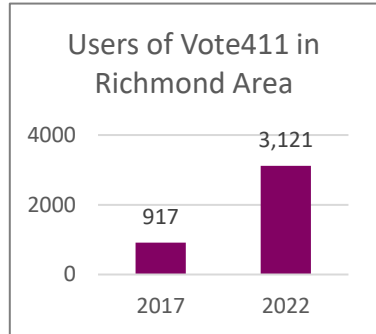


The 2021 elections (general and primary) were the Metro Richmond League's tenth year covering local races and ballot issues for VOTE411, our online voter guide. Included were House of Delegates candidates, Richmond City constitutional officers, special elections in Goochland and Ashland, and ballot issues in Goochland and Richmond. We also surveyed candidates in races in neighboring localities not represented by a local League. In 2022, our League will cover US Congressional District 4 and any local special elections and ballot issues, all based on new districts due to redistricting.

Candidate participation for our local candidates in the 2021 general election was excellent. All five Richmond city candidates and all three Ashland town council candidates replied to the survey, as did one of Goochland's two school board candidates. Of our 30 House of Delegates candidates, 13 replied.

User participation was up dramatically in 2021 compared to 2017.

We printed 2500 VOTE411 bookmarks that were distributed to all area library branches, in other public places, and at Voter Service registration and information events.



Many thanks to all who helped with research, data entry, and phone calls, including Donna Granski, Lisa Halberstadt, Rebecca Neale, Trish Schwagmeyer, Carol Stephens, Ruth Twiggs, and co-chairs Evelyn Glazier and Mary Julia Street. Thanks also to all the Leaguers who distributed bookmarks and spread the word about VOTE411!



Our voter registration table



High School Civics Curriculum

Working with schools is always a challenge, especially with seniors who are so stressed about SOLs, AP tests, and college applications. Adding COVID provided extra challenges as most schools weren't allowing volunteers in. So we were excited to be able to make our interactive presentation on voting literacy to students at Meadowbrook High School in April. In 2 class periods, we registered nearly 40 high school seniors.

One of the seniors turned in a voter's registration form to LWV. Fast forward to last week.....he participated in the One Small Step (StoryCorps) interviews and when I asked about voting, well, this young man became giddy! He said he just received his voter's card and he put it in his wallet (because the card says to carry it with you, 😊)... He said when the LWV talked to his class he found out he could register because he will be 18 at the election. I wish you could have seen his face when he was telling me the story. He was over-the-top excited about being a registered voter.

- Meadowbrook High School Librarian

The program's reputation is growing. Over a short period this spring, we heard from a student requesting an interview, another possible school expressing interest, and another League from a small city wanting information about what we are doing.

Our "stretch goal" for the coming year is to hold a voter registration event at every Richmond-area public high school!

Advocacy Actions

At each level in the League of Women Voters organization – national, state, and local – Leagues study and develop positions on issues – outside of Voter Service – that are important to voters’ ability to participate fully in a democracy. Advocacy actions include developing educational materials, providing forums for discussion and education, testifying to governing bodies, and many other ways of achieving a position. We carry out these activities through our committees’ actions and through official statements from our President, *who is solely authorized to speak on behalf of the League.*

Actions in 2021-2022

In FY22 we took advocacy actions on a variety of issues:

- Advocated for a shuttle **bus to the City Registrar’s office.**
- Testified in support of the city’s **Rank Choice Voting** ordinance.
- Informed members and encouraged their participation in the City of Richmond’s **redistricting** process.
- Observed **meetings of Electoral Boards** in Richmond City and Henrico, Chesterfield, and Hanover Counties.
- Represented the League on the Community **Transportation** Advisory Committee of PlanRVA.
- Researched the **affordable housing** plans of local jurisdictions and held educational programs on housing and zoning.

Advocacy Planning for 2022-2023



Twenty-four Leaguers participated in the annual Advocacy Program Planning meeting in January. Members reviewed and endorsed our positions and weighed in on advocacy actions of interest to them.

As a result, we established a new Education Committee to support and build on the position on **public education**. We are also planning education and advocacy programs on the issues of **gun violence prevention** and **healthcare**.

Read about all of our positions on our website (“About LWV”) or at this link: <https://bit.ly/3ckd8Ph>

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



In our second year as a standing committee, DEI welcomed about a dozen active members at our Zoom meetings in the early evening. Our new logo highlights DEI's presence in communications with the League and community.

Our Mission

The DEI Committee assists the LWV Richmond Metro Board and other committees in applying a DEI lens to all activities and interactions with the community. We recognize that education is key to understanding DEI principles, so we arrange informative programs periodically during the year. We also publicize DEI offerings by other organizations, including LWVVA and LWVUS.

DEI is at the heart of every League of Women Voters program ... [It is] inextricable from the mission to empower voters and defend democracy. ---LWVUS

Our Accomplishments in 2021-2022

- Organized a workshop for the Board of Directors with Dr. Darryl Lester, who conducted a “Ten Lenses” activity.
- Presented a speaker in commemoration of Black History Month. Author Elvatrice Belsches’ talk about her book on the African American history of Richmond drew over 50 attendees, including some from partner organizations.
- Arranged for VCU professor Dr. Grace Gipson to speak at our annual meeting on Critical Race Theory.
- Raised funds for future DEI programs through sales of Ms. Belsches’ book.



Jane Newell, Grace Gipson, and Doris Bey

Legislative Advocacy

Virginia's General Assembly, 2022

Because of our location, many Richmond Metro Leaguers are able to take part in advocacy at the state Capitol during sessions of the General Assembly. This year, we gathered before the session to hear about the Virginia League's legislative priorities and to practice effective ways of advocating with our Delegates and Senators as active constituents.

During the session, our members attended the **Women's Legislative Round Tables** – virtually or in person – to learn about



Richmond Metro Leaguers in the Senate Gallery

bills under consideration. Six of our members attended "League Day" in person, where LWV is recognized in the Capitol chambers. Members also attended rallies for voting rights on the Capitol grounds.

We encouraged our members to join a **LWVVA Issue Group** to follow and support relevant legislation of interest to them. In the coming year, we aim to improve our use of online tools for legislative advocacy, including Calls to Action during the session.

Ranked Choice Voting

The Election Law study that was completed in 2021 added positions on Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) to our LWVVA positions. This enabled us to act locally and so we have! Our small RCV team presented a brief *What you Need to Know* session to educate members on this voting method. President Jane Newell provided Citizen Comment to the Richmond City Council in support of RCV in March and again in June. It is expected that a vote to use RCV for the 2024 City Council elections will be taken in September.

There is opportunity to advocate for RCV in other area localities. The 2020 law allows for use of RCV for both city council and county board of supervisors' elections.

Affordable Housing

Forum on Zoning

The Affordable Housing Committee ended the year with a bang! On June 28th over 60 leaguers, citizens, and government and non-profit representatives from across Virginia attended our hybrid (in-person and Zoom) forum on



Demystifying Zoning: Why It Matters. Jonathan Rak of McGuireWoods talked about the history of zoning, noting that its initial purpose was to separate not only housing types but people. Tom Jacobson, adjunct faculty of planning at VCU, explained the nuts and bolts of zoning. A recording of the session can be heard at <https://youtu.be/BUudCfngpmo>.

Housing is considered “affordable” if rent and utilities consume no more than 30% of the household’s total monthly income.

Committee Activities

The Affordable Housing Committee is very active and committed. We meet monthly at midday on the fourth Wednesday via Zoom. During the past year, we’ve been researching the Affordable Housing Plans in our local jurisdictions, with presentations from:

- Dan Cohen, Director of Community Enhancement, Chesterfield
- Sherrill Hampton, Director of Housing, Richmond
- Eric Leabough, Director of Community Revitalization, Henrico

To access video recordings of those meetings on YouTube, please contact communications@lwg-rva.org.

For 2022-2023, we’re planning a follow-up forum on the intersection of zoning and affordable housing, and more information on how Leaguers can advocate for affordable housing in their communities.

Transportation

Transportation is one of the fundamental building blocks of our communities – one without which nothing else works. The right to decent transportation is as important as the right to vote. In fact, without transportation you may have difficulty voting.

– Rev. Ben Campbell, author of *Richmond's Unhealed History*

Our small transportation group was led and inspired for many years by Virginia Cowles, who is now a resident of Alexandria, VA. This year, we have continued to do good work through our representation of the Richmond Metro League on the Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) of PlanRVA. Through the research of League Intern Amelia Gulding, we were also able to produce a document detailing the operation of the Central Virginia Transportation Authority. You can read that report at <https://bit.ly/3v3OYzc>.



Communications

The large and diversely-skilled Communications Committee uses a variety of media to share important information with our members as well as with the general public. Embracing this digital age, we are becoming more proficient in managing a variety of technologies to support League activities.



Zoom was essential during the pandemic, but also allows more members to participate in meetings and programs. In addition to regular Board and committee meetings, we hosted 12 all-member or community programs in FY22.



On our website, www.lwv-rva.org, we provide well-curated and intentional information for our members and the public. In June 2022, we had 2,000 page visits.



We use Mailchimp to send members the biweekly *Mini-Leaguer* to publicize our upcoming activities, and to send reminders of special events. Our emails have a “read” rate of over 60%!



Our [Facebook page](#) has 412 followers who see posts about our activities and reposts of messages from partner organizations on issues related to our positions.



Our [Twitter feed](#) had 11,067 impressions in six months of 2022. We added 45 new followers, including Vote Riders, Black Voters Matter, and Virginia Mercury journalist Kate Masters. Tweets about our annual meeting and about voter registration at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture were seen and retweeted most often.



Eventbrite offers on-line registration for special programs, whether for members or the community.



The committee helps to design and find printing services for a variety of educational and publicity items, from voter fact sheets to Vote411 bookmarks to car stickers to business cards.

Goals for 2022-2023

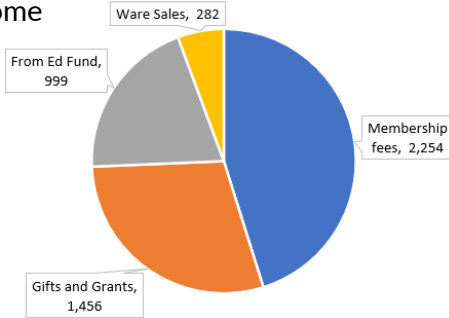
While we have expanded communication within our membership, our goal for next year is to be more effective via social media in communicating with the public. This is a great way to amplify the League's voice with a focus on voter education and voting rights.

Financial Report

Financial Highlights

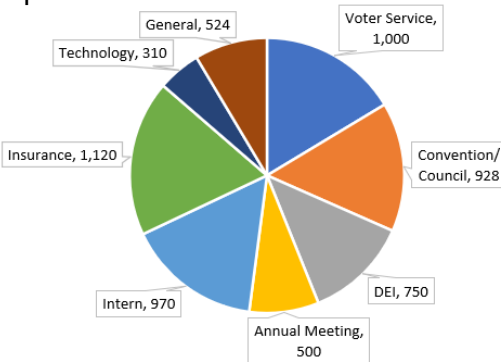
Our income derives from membership dues, grants and contributions, transfers from our tax-exempt Education Fund, and sales of a variety of wares. We also received significant value from in-kind contributions (not included in these charts).

Income



Of the \$55 an individual member paid in FY22 dues, a large part was passed through to the national and state Leagues, leaving \$7 per member for local League income.

Expense



Expenses include *Program* costs (voter service, DEI, internship, state and national convention/ council, annual meeting); and *Operating* costs (insurance, technology, general office expense).

Our expenses exceeded income by just over \$1,100.

Asset	Income	Expense	Net	Balance as of 6/30/22
Bank Accounts	\$4,991	\$6,102	(\$1,111)	\$14,668
Education Fund	\$3,175	\$999	\$2,176	\$10,322

The complete Financial Report may be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/3PJk1bi> .



- ❖ To our volunteers, who freely give their time and energy to our programs and help our operations run smoothly.
- ❖ To our donors, who make our activities possible through their contributions to the general and education funds.
- ❖ To those who donated in-kind services this year in the amount of \$996.

Looking Ahead

At our annual meeting, members approved an increase in dues for FY23 from \$55 to \$75 per individual member, of which \$27 will remain with our local League. This increase enabled us to adopt a budget for the coming year that covers our fixed expenses from dues. Donations, fundraisers, and monies drawn from the Education Fund will meet our flexible expenses. The FY23 budget may be viewed at this link. <https://bit.ly/3Oom6sj>

The Finance Committee's goals for the coming year are to:

- Determine the feasibility of applying for 501(c)(3) status so that we can administer the Education Fund locally, rather than having to coordinate transactions through LWVUS.
- Explore ways of encouraging donations, possibly through having a multi-level dues structure.

Support Us!

Visit our online store to support the League by purchasing a tee shirt, mug, or cap!

<https://www.bonfire.com/store/lwv-richmond-metro-store/>

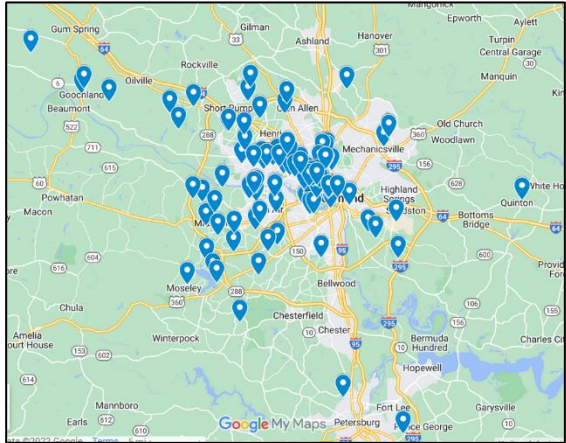


Membership and Engagement

About Our Members

At the end of June 2022, 135 women and men were members of LWV Richmond Metro. Thirty of these were new members who joined during the year. A flurry of new registrations in July 2022 indicates robust growth as we approach the coming US general election year.

Our district includes the city of Richmond, the counties of Chesterfield, Henrico, and Hanover, and the town of Ashland. Our members represent many locations in the Richmond Metro Area.



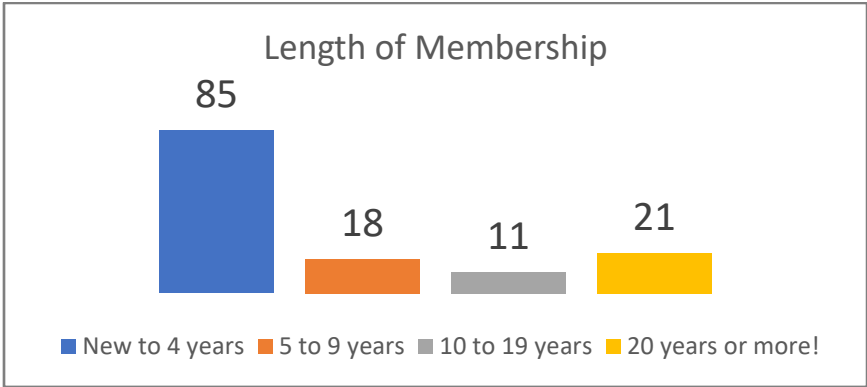
There couldn't be a more consequential moment in American history. The League is the way for me to help shape our future.

--- A Richmond League member



Longtime members Penny Anderson, Lynn Johnston, Lorraine Waddill, Anne Sterling, and Gail Schweickert at our Annual Meeting

A profile of our membership shows that, while many members are relatively new to the League, we have a considerable number of veteran members as well (including several 50-year stalwarts!)



New Member Orientation

The League is a complex, multi-tiered organization. To help new members find their areas of interest and become active more quickly, we held orientation sessions via Zoom to share our experience of how the League works. The sessions in November, January, and May served 15 members. Many said they were glad to be welcomed in this way, and reported a better understanding of League “lingo” and procedures.

Member Engagement Survey

Twenty-nine members completed a brief online survey in September 2021. Their responses helped us know more about members’ interests, skills, and availability to participate in League activities. The Finance, Bylaws, and Voter Service Committees welcomed new members identified by the survey.

Book Discussion Group

As an outcome of the 2021 Advocacy Planning meeting, a small group began meeting monthly to discuss books about pioneering women and important issues of the day. The selections included three books by Virginia authors who enlivened the Zoom meetings with their participation. All of the books read were memorable, but James McBride’s memoir about his white mother, *The Color of Water*, sparked the most discussion and reflection.

Goals for 2022-2023

In the coming year, Membership and Engagement Committee Chair Carol Stephens aims to make personal connections with new members in the first few weeks of their joining, and to put them in touch with committees or activities that match their interests. The committee will plan educational and social programs to engage all of our members and to further our mission.

In Memoriam



Lynn Johnston shared her memories of long-time member **Gwendolyn Allen**, who joined the Richmond Metro League in the mid-1980s. Gwen was among the first of several African-American women who brought much-needed diversity to our League at that time. She was an active member of the Healthcare Committee. Her connections in the Black community

enabled the committee to study inequities in the care of elders in 114 nursing homes in the Richmond area. The committee's detailed report to the city council spurred new legislation to address eldercare abuse. Gwen passed away in April at age 89. We are inspired by her actions and honor her contributions.

Join the League!

Join LWV Richmond Metro or renew your membership on our website at <https://www.lwv-rva.org/join-lwv-rva-form/>.



In person at last at our annual meeting in May!

Board of Directors, 2021-2022

President	Jane Newell
Vice President – Program	Alice Tousignant
Vice President – Operations	Carol Stephens
Vice President – Voter Service	Penny Adams
Secretary	Becki Lawson
Treasurer	Cynthia Moore
Directors	Doris Bey Karen Rosenblum Kelly Coleman Natalie Testa Lynn McMartin D’Jaris Woody

New Board for FY2023

At our annual meeting on May 21, we elected new VP for Voter Service, Mary Crutchfield; new Secretary, Sandy Fowler-Jones; and new Directors, Fran Eckenrode, Sam Florer, Marianne Feeney, Becki Lawson, and Carol Stephens. Penny Adams and Lynn McMartin retired from the Board with the League’s heartfelt thanks for their service.

Committee Chairs 2021-2022

Affordable Housing	Alice Tousignant
Bylaws	Claire Gastanaga
Communications	Anna Mason, Kelly Coleman
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Doris Bey
Electoral Board Observers	Mary Grace Boyle
Finance	Carol Stephens
Membership & Engagement	Membership task force
Ranked Choice Voting	Jane Newell
Transportation	Karen Rosenblum

Questions or comments? Contact communications@lwv-rva.org.

League Principles

The League is 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. The League is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. We work to encourage informed and active participation in government and influence public policy through education and advocacy.