

The Leaguer

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NEWSLETTER

December 2019

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Happy holidays to all our LWV-RMA members!

2020 will be a very busy year, with many events and activities. Join us in January for a special event focused on **ranked choice voting** (January 5) and for our annual **Program Advocacy Planning Meeting** (January 25). In February we will be going on a field trip to the Virginia Museum of History and Culture to view **Determined: The 400-Year Struggle for Black Equality** (February 22).

In the coming year forecasters look for historic legislation in Virginia, including ratification of the **Equal Rights Amendment**. We will also celebrate the **100-year anniversary** of The League of Women Voters, as, true to its heritage, the League participates as a partner in the **national 2020 census**. In the Spring will be primary elections, and in the Fall the presidential, congressional, and Richmond city elections.

Lynn McMartin



Lynn McMartin, seated at left, at 2019 LWV-VA Convention with Doris, Alice, and Marianne; and (standing) Mary, Lynn J., Virginia, Jane, and Valarie.

CALENDAR

Date	Event	Time	Location
December 2019			
17	LWV-RMA Board Meeting	3:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Ginter Park Presbyterian Church 3601 Seminary Ave, Richmond, VA
January 2020			
5	EDUCATED VOTER: Ranked Choice Voting	2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Libbie Mill Library 2100 Libbie Lake East St, Henrico, VA
8	Opening Day of the General Assembly		Capitol of Virginia, Richmond
15	Women’s Legislative Roundtable (WLRT)	8:30 am – 9:30 am	Tidewater Room, 4 th Floor SunTrust Building, 919 E. Main St., RVA
21	LWV-RMA Board Meeting	3:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Ginter Park Presbyterian Church 3601 Seminary Ave, Richmond, VA
22	Women’s Legislative Roundtable	8:30 am – 9:30 am	Tidewater Room, 4 th Floor SunTrust Building
25	Annual Advocacy Program Planning Meeting	10:00 am – 2:00 pm	Tuckahoe Public Library 1901 Starling Dr. Henrico VA
29	Women’s Legislative Roundtable	8:30 am – 9:30 am	Tidewater Room, 4 th Floor SunTrust Building
February 2020			
1	** SNOW DATE ** Annual Advocacy Program Planning Meeting	10:00 am – 2:00 pm	
5	Women’s Legislative Roundtable	8:30 am – 9:30 am	Tidewater Room, 4 th Floor SunTrust Building
5	Meet and Greet	5:30 pm – 7:00 pm	Watch the Mini-Leaguer for details!
12	League Day and WLRT	8:00 am – 5:00 pm	Auditorium, 4 th Floor SunTrust Building
18	LWV-RMA Board Meeting	3:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Ginter Park Presbyterian Church 3601 Seminary Ave, Richmond, VA
19	Women’s Legislative Roundtable	8:30 am – 9:30 am	Tidewater Room, 4 th Floor SunTrust Building
22	Black History Month Celebration: “Determined” exhibit followed by lunch	10:00 am – 2:00 pm	Virginia Museum of History & Culture 428 N Arthur Ashe Blvd., Richmond Lunch at Va. Museum of Fine Arts
26	Women’s Legislative Roundtable	8:30 am – 9:30 am	Tidewater Room, 4 th Floor SunTrust Building
March 2020			
17	LWV-RMA Board Meeting	3:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Ginter Park Presbyterian Church 3601 Seminary Ave, Richmond, VA

COMING EVENTS**LWV-RMA Annual Advocacy Program Planning Meeting****Saturday, January 25**

Wondering what the League does and what you can do in the League?

Be part of the all-member meeting when we plan
our Advocacy Action for the upcoming year

10am – 2pm, Saturday, January 25, 2020

Lunch included

Tuckahoe Public Library

1901 Starling Drive, Henrico 23229

LWV-RMA Annual Advocacy Program Planning Meeting

We will do several important things in this meeting.

We will consider whether we support LWVUS's continuation of the Making Democracy Work Campaign, which is focused on voting rights, improving elections, campaign finance/money in politics, and redistricting. If we support that, we will need to consider how we want to shape our local programming around the Campaign. As in the past, LWVUS suggests that local Leagues take up this charge in the upcoming biennium, rather than proposing new national studies or reviews, though we are nonetheless free to make such recommendations.

We will consider whether we support via "concurrence" the LWVUS position on Voter Representation. ("Concurrence" is agreement with a decision reached by another League). The Voter Representation Position in Brief is: Support electoral systems at each level of government that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable and enhance representation for all voters. This link will take you to the background and detail of this new position: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/recommended-concurrence-lwvus-board-2020-22-program-planning>. This approach to a new position is new to the LWVUS Board, as it pilots new ways to adopt and/or update LWVUS positions.

We will review LWV-RMA advocacy positions. Do we have positions we want to study (that is, add), delete, update, restudy, and/or advocate over the next year? Remember that our current broadly structured positions can encompass a wide range of advocacy, and that updates, studies, and restudies require leadership and Leaguer participants. (Someone will be asked to do the work!). If you think you will recommend changes in the positions, let us know so we can organize the meeting to maximize discussion of that. Here is a link to our LWV-RMA positions: http://www.richmond.va.lwvnet.org/about_action.html

We will plan our LWV-RMA advocacy activities for the year. Advocacy activities could include educating ourselves through our committees or in Hot Topic meetings, providing public forums for discussion and education, developing educational materials, organizing letter-writing efforts, providing guest commentary to newspapers, testifying to local boards and commissions, developing educational materials, lobbying local elected officials, and more!

Lastly, we will hear from two of our RMA members who have been participating in LWV-VA studies that we have initiated and strongly support – Jane Newell on Election Security and Alice Tousignant on Affordable Housing. They will talk us through the process and progress of these studies. We don't often have our own members in the leadership of state studies, so this promises to be an informative discussion.

And of course, we will have some fun, a nice lunch, and a chance to catch up with League friends.

For more information, contact Karen Rosenblum, (krosenbl@gmu.edu).

Karen Rosenblum, 1st Vice President for Programming

Black History Commemoration

"WE ARE DETERMINED TO BE PEOPLE."

*-Martin Luther King, Jr. from the speech, I've Been to the Mountaintop,
delivered on April 3, 1968 at Mason Temple, Memphis, Tennessee*

The LWV-RVA Black History Committee is sponsoring a tour on February 22 of *Determined: The 400-Year Struggle for Black Equality* at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture. All members are encouraged to view this important exhibition in commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in British North America.

The fourth Saturday in February is LWV-RMA's usual Black History commemoration date. In recent years we've visited both the National Museum of African American Culture and History in Washington D.C. and the Black History Museum and Cultural Center in Richmond. These were amazing experiences, enhanced because we shared them as a group. *Determined* looks to be equally impactful and thought-provoking. You can read more about the exhibition at <https://www.virginiahistory.org/exhibitions/determined-400-year-struggle-black-equality>.

Our group tour will start at 10:00 am, followed by lunch at 12:00 noon at the adjacent Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Admission to the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, which includes admission to all exhibits, is \$10, or \$8 for seniors, and no charge for museum members (be sure to bring your membership card), but we will need a head count for the tour and to make reservations at Amuse Restaurant. See the lunch menu at <https://www.vmfa.museum/visit/dining/amuse-restaurant/> (lunch is on your own; VMFA members get discounts). Please contact Virginia Cowles at vipcowles@gmail.com or Mabel Wells at m.wells1@att.net by December 30 to let them know you will be attending the *Determined* exhibit and lunch.

Women's Legislative Roundtable

A Forum Open to All Virginians and Legislators



On Wednesdays during the General Assembly Session, the Virginia state League hosts an hour-long morning briefing by Legislators and/or Advocacy/Issue groups. This provides us with updates on legislation throughout the Session so that our advocacy messages are very timely.

Most meetings are held in the Tidewater Room on the fourth floor of the SunTrust building on Main Street, conveniently located across from the Pocahontas Building, where legislators have their offices.

League members who come to the Roundtable on Wednesdays can also arrange to visit their legislators and attend committee meetings and floor sessions.

To learn more about the Roundtable, read LWV-VA's brochure at https://lwv-va.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/wlrt/wlrt_brochure_2017.pdf.

COMMITTEES

Membership & Engagement

Presentation on the Anti-Corruption Act by RepresentUs

During a recent **Hot Topics** meeting, Kenneth Trostad from the Richmond Chapter of RepresentUs discussed how Americans can begin to address corruption in politics. This group identified needed reforms and put them in a model law named the *Anti-Corruption Act*.

Some of the provisions in the Act include:

- Make it illegal for politicians to take money from lobbyists
- Immediately disclose political money online
- Crack down on super PACs
- End gerrymandering
- Change how elections are funded
- Let voters rank their top candidates

Since the model law is not expected to be adopted by the US Congress, RepresentUs is leading the way to pass the Act in cities and states across America.

Check out their video called *Unbreaking America: Solving the Corruption Crisis* at www.represent.us and the *Summary of Provisions* for more information.



The Educated Voter:
Ranked Choice Voting

An exploration of **Ranked Choice Voting** will be held on Sunday, January 5, from 2:00 to 5:00 pm at the Libbie Mill Library.

Ranked choice voting is:

- a method of casting votes in races that have more than two candidates
- ensures that the winner has the support of a majority of voters
- sometimes called an "instant runoff"

How does it work? Should we adopt Ranked Choice Voting in Virginia? Learn more at an interactive demonstration, led by FairVote Virginia and co-sponsored by Richmond Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., AAUW of Greater Richmond, and RepresentUs.

Jeanne D'Ascoli, Chair

Voter Services

Civics in Action

Meadowbrook High School students had insightful questions and comments for Anna Mason, who represented LWV-RMA at the school's Non-profit Fair on November 6 and 7, 2019.

The students led the way on a discussion that included the history of the League of Women Voters and the current impact the League is having at the local, state, and federal levels. The LWV-RMA website got favorable reviews from students for being very transparent about our non-partisan political stance. And Anna reports that the students were "blown away" by VOTE411 and its ability to create a sample ballot.

The Voter Service Committee recently decided to focus more on educating voters, beginning with schools. This fits in perfectly with Anna's experience at Meadowbrook, which began with the school enquiring via the website if we would participate in the Non-profit Fair.

Clearly, there is a desire and a need for voter information for students, particularly since the dissolution of Inspire, a non-profit group that worked in schools to register voters. Anna, who is Webmaster and Communication Chair, along with several other interested members, will be working with the Voter Service Committee on applying for grants and developing a voter education civics curriculum.

There are ideas in the planning stage to host high school civics classes and partner with schools to go on field trips to legislative offices. Who better than the League of Women Voters to get students involved and demonstrate that *Democracy Is Not a Spectator Sport!*

Anna Mason, Voter Services Committee

Housing

Statewide Affordable Housing Study Underway

A state affordable housing study has begun, led by the Richmond League, that will hopefully culminate in a position on affordable housing to be approved at the 2021 LWV-VA State Convention.

The study will focus on housing for people at 50% of Area Median Income or below (\$35,400 for a family of two – Virginia). An Affordable Housing Study Committee has been established with representatives from 11 of 14 local Leagues in the State. The State League has created a web page that can be accessed at <https://lwv-va.org/publications/our-studies/lwv-va-affordable-housing-study-2019/>. It will hold all of the research and reports generated by the Committee, to include an outline of activities and timeline for the Study. Within the next 30 days, the Committee will send out a link to a survey to all League members, gauging your interest in affordable housing and requesting your input to the study. For more information, contact Alice Tousignant at alice@hdadvisors.net.

Candidates' Forum on Evictions

Around 100 people attended the Richmond area candidates' forum on evictions at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture on October 10, 2019. The forum was sponsored by CARE, the Campaign to Reduce Evictions, in partnership with the Richmond Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., which handled registration, and the LWV-RMA, which handled time keeping.

House candidates Dawn Adams, Jeff Bourne, Betsy Carr, and Peter Wells, and Senate candidate Ghazala Hashmi participated. Questions from the moderator and the audience provoked thoughtful answers and discussion from the candidates.

Although the 2019 General Assembly passed some helpful legislation, more needs to be done

to reduce and prevent evictions and to assist people in finding affordable housing and avoiding homelessness. There was general agreement that holistic approaches are needed to address employment, income, and health issues as they relate to evictions and other housing issues.

Transportation

At the November meeting of the Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), Barbara Smith, Project Manager Chesterfield County Department of Transportation, discussed the proposed Jefferson Davis Highway Transit Service in Chesterfield County from Chippenham Parkway to John Tyler Community College. GRTC bus #111 is scheduled to begin 30-minute service in March 2020. In December 2017 and in January and February 2018, LWV-RMA members advocated for extending bus service into Chesterfield and Henrico counties. We are proud of the part we played in bringing better transit service to the Richmond area.

At the same meeting, Chet Parsons, PlanRVA Director of Transportation, gave an update on plans for the Ashland-to-Petersburg multiuse trail (think bicycles, scooters, pedestrians). The most cost-effective route that will traverse the most interesting locations will be chosen.

If there are any transportation needs affecting you or your neighborhood, please inform a member of the LWV-RMA Transportation Committee—Virginia Cowles, Mary Crutchfield, Alice Tousignant, or Sarah Weisiger.

Transportation Advocacy Opportunity

As a result of an excursion on the GRTC bus to Short Pump, Leaguers discovered a great need for sidewalks, crosswalks, and count-down pedestrian crossing signals.

LWV-RMA members will have opportunities to advocate for pedestrian safety infrastructure along certain bus lines. **We need residents of Henrico and Chesterfield** to present these

needs along West Broad Street and the Jefferson Davis Highway to their boards of supervisors.



If you are interested in volunteering during January and February 2020, please let Virginia Cowles, Chair, Transportation Committee know (vipcowles@gmail.com). She will provide some relevant facts to support your presentation, if needed. Also, members of the Transportation Committee will be there to support you when you speak. Please consider helping with this important effort.



Participate in Transit Planning Before the Deal is Done!

The Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization is in the process of selecting a few GRTC routes with 15-minute service for implementation within the next 5 years. If you are concerned about such plans – either all in favor or dead set against or anything in between – please let me know before the end of January.

The chief routes under consideration are:

- D. Midlothian Turnpike (from downtown Richmond to Chesterfield Town Center)
- E. West End South (from downtown to Gaskins Road along Main/Cary and Patterson)
- F. Airport via Route 60, and
- H. Route 1 north to St. Joseph's Villa.

Maps showing D, E, F, and H routes, as well as other routes considered less feasible, can be accessed at https://planrva.org/wp-content/uploads/Corridor_Fact_Sheets_12.3.19.pdf. Please send your opinion on the proposed routes to vipcowles@gmail.com by January 31, 2020.

Virginia Cowles, Chair

STATE LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

Women's Legislative Roundtable Pre-Session

About 120 League members from around the state met in Richmond on December 4 for the annual Women's Legislative Roundtable Pre-Session meeting. We heard experts from twenty nonprofit organizations speak about their priority issues and legislation for the 2020 General Assembly session.



Leaguers listen to keynote speaker, ACLU's Claire Gastanaga

Topics included elections, voting rights, transparency in government, education, women's rights, gun violence prevention, healthcare, juvenile justice, transportation, and environmental issues (among others).

Described as "**speed dating for policy wonks**", Pre-Session energizes Leaguers for action, while fostering connections among those who share similar interests and concerns.

Visit lis.virginia.gov for more information on these high-profile bills:

- HJ1 and SJ1: Ratification of the ERA
- HB1: No Excuse Absentee Voting
- VA Constitutional Amendment – Redistricting Commission

You can also search for bills by topic and get information about upcoming committee meetings (after the session begins).

REPORT FROM OUR INTERN

Six months have passed since I began my internship with the League, and I am grateful to be a small footnote in such a vast legacy. Through various initiatives, I have sought to extend our name into the new generation.

Social media is an integral part of modern outreach, and the Instagram account that I developed in June (@lwv.rma) attracts a younger audience than our other outlets. It allows us to easily connect with Leagues across the country, as well as establish ties with other voting rights organizations (such as The Civics Center, who recently messaged us from California about collaborating to register high school students). We will soon be joining LWV US in their year-long campaign, "#SheisMeLWV," which features individual members' stories in order to express that everyone can be a Leaguer. If you have questions about our different media sources, I have created a Communications Guide that will be distributed in the near future.

Outside of the digital environment, we have continued to strengthen an existing relationship with VCU's Student Government Association. This served as a catalyst to register voters at the SOVO (Student Organization and Volunteer Opportunities) Fair back in August, where I learned that some young people are deterred from voting because they feel that elected officials do not have their interest at heart. I wrote to persuade them that we must work with the system in order to change it, and my letter was posted as Correspondent of the Day in the Richmond Times-Dispatch on September 19.

Regarding the very near future, I hope to see more youth registered, educated, and present at the General Assembly, holding leadership accountable for the society that we will inherit. I believe we can achieve that, one Instagram caption at a time.

Morgan Johns, LWV-RMA Intern

CONTACTS

How can YOU get involved? Our Richmond area league is active all over the democracy space. Reach out to one of our Board officers or Committee chairs to find out what opportunities match up with your interests.

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Contact</i>
President	Lynn McMartin
1 st Vice President, Program	Karen Rosenblum
2 nd Vice President, Administration	Marianne Feeney
Secretary	Becki Lawson
Treasurer	Mary Anne Stone
Past President	Mary Crutchfield
Black History Commemoration	Mabel Wells
Communications	Anna Mason
Election Modernization	Jane Newell
Housing	Alice Tousignant
Membership and Engagement	Jeanne D'Ascoli
Transportation	Virginia Cowles
Vote411	Evelyn Glazier
Voter Services	Valarie Fillgrove Penny Adams
Women's Issues	Donna Granski




JOIN OR RENEW MEMBERSHIP

Please join or rejoin the League of Women Voters of the Richmond Metropolitan Area.

Our fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30. Membership in the LWV-RMA also confers membership in the League of Women Voters of Virginia and in the League of Women Voters of the United States. Membership is open to all U.S. citizens of voting age.

New members who join after December 31 pay half the dues amounts shown below.

To join or renew online and pay with PayPal, visit the League of Women Voters of the Richmond Metropolitan Area’s website at <http://www.lwv-rva.org>, or print and complete the form below and send with your check by postal mail.



<u>Membership Type</u>	<u>Annual Dues</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> One member	\$55
<input type="checkbox"/> Two members in one household	\$85
<input type="checkbox"/> Student member	\$20

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Cell Telephone: _____

E-mail address: _____

Name of household member, if applicable: _____

I want to support the LWV with a contribution of \$ _____

Interests:

<input type="checkbox"/> Voter Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Equal Rights Amendment
<input type="checkbox"/> Poll Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Election Modernization	<input type="checkbox"/> Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Legislation
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation		

Please make your check payable to **LWV-RMA** and mail to:



LWV-RMA
 P.O. Box 25492
 Richmond, VA 23260-5492

Membership dues and contributions to the League of Women Voters are not deductible as a business or personal expense for tax purposes. Contributions to the League of Women Voters Education Fund are tax deductible.