



121 Cathedral Street, Suite 2B, Annapolis MD 21401 Tel.

410-269-0232 ~ lwvmd.org Email: info@lwvmd.org

Follow us @LWVMD on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram

Editor: Linda Rittelmann

Co-Presidents: Lois Hybl and Richard Willson

STATE BOARD LETTER

January 2021

LWVMD Calendar

February

09 – **Female & Incarcerated: Pathways to Imprisonment & Barriers to Reentry** – Online event hosted by the Baltimore City and County Leagues. 1:00 PM Register [here](#).

15 - **State Board Meeting** – 7:00 - 9:00PM – Online Event

26 - **Local League Program Planning** report forms are due to [Elaine Apter](#)

March

20 - **State Board Meeting** – 7:00 - 9:00PM – Online Event

Planning your local league calendar? Click [here](#) to see the whole calendar.

Presidents' Message

This is the first State Board Letter of 2021, so it is time for resolutions. We can feel proud of the way we pivoted to virtual work and meetings and interacted with the public and State Board of Elections to inform voters of the new election procedures in 2020. Now we need to think about what we want to accomplish in 2021.

In light of the recent challenges to our democracy, our **Making Democracy Work Legislative Priorities** are especially relevant. For example, we have already included in testimony the best practices for Vote By Mail that we identified in our consensus. Because we approved the study at Council and reached our consensus by December, we are able to act in a timely way. The Redistricting Team headed by **Beth Huffnagel** is doing its best to make the process more fair and transparent. Thanks to LWVUS convention resolutions and positions and LWVMD positions, our Police Reform Committee headed by **Nancy Soreng** is advocating along with the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability on five major reforms. These are only two examples of the hard work by our Advocacy Committee headed by **Roy Appletree**.

Administratively, we are trying to leave good records for the next administration on our Google Drive. We have written job descriptions for board officers and committees, so that incoming board and off-board volunteers have a better understanding of their jobs. Our Nominating Committee, chaired by **Ralph Watkins**, is hard at work recruiting candidates.

The Personnel Committee has worked hard to develop a Personnel Handbook to provide overall guidance for our staff. Of course, the latest task has been the search for a new State Director. As of February 1, we

will have completed the first round of interviews of ten candidates. The next task will be to do final interviews and hopefully make a recommendation to the board at our February 15 meeting.

We are eager to see the results of Local League program planning by February 26 because those decisions will influence our goals and activities for the coming year.

Would you like to be involved in planning our 2021 State Convention for June 5? It will be virtual, but that gives us a chance to expand our choices for a speaker -- think Stacy Abrams or Nancy Pelosi or Kamala Harris! Board volunteers for the planning committee are **Elaine Apter** (convener), **Andrea Gruhl** and **Deborah Mitchell**. Contact Elaine at eapter@lwvmd.org to volunteer for the planning committee.

Thank you and keep up the good work!

Lois Hybl - Co-President

January State Board Meeting Highlights

- The Personnel Committee will begin interviewing later this week and hopes to be able to present a candidate for the Board's approval at the February 15th meeting.
- A committee was appointed to make recommendations for bylaw revisions for the League of Women Voters of Maryland Advocacy Fund (our C4 entity). Members will include Niecy Chambers, [Roy Appletree](#), [Nancy Soreng](#), and Richard Willson as convenor.
- [Nancy Soreng](#) reported that thanks to the efforts of our Fundraising Committee (like \$12,000+ from our year-end appeal), have left us in good financial standing entering the New Year.
- The board approved joining the **Maryland Cannabis Policy Coalition** with [Nancy Soreng](#) as our linking person. (Though not one of our current legislative priority items, this group's platform is consistent with our position and we can best support such efforts by working in coalitions.)
- Consistent with our League's positions favoring transparency in government, our bylaws have been posted on our website and the Board approved adding these summaries of our meeting minutes beginning this month.
- The Board decided that the **2021 Convention on June 5th** should be planned as a virtual event with an aggressive approach to securing notable guest speakers. The planning committee will include both board and non-board members. Elaine Apter will chair the planning committee and [Andrea Gruhl](#) and [Deborah Mitchell](#) will join her from the Board. To volunteer, email Elaine at eapter@lwvmd.org.

Summarized by Richard Willson

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Our policy reads that "LWVMD is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy." On Sunday evening, January 31st, a dozen League members from across the State gathered to discuss ways that this policy should be implemented. DEI is an additional lens we apply when considering our position on legislative proposals. Our DEI emphasis is key to our support for the racial

justice positions we discussed at our Winter Workshop. To add your name to the 25 members on the invitation list for our February 14 meeting at 6:00 p.m., email me!

[Richard Willson](#), Co-President

Equity for Students Now



Did You Miss the Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) Town Hall on January 27?

MEC has made it easy for you to see the information presented by providing a [link to the slide show](#) that is packed with information about the coalition's legislative priorities. It has excellent graphics to help people understand the statistics about learning loss and inequities that advocates hope to address with the Blueprint Override and other legislation.

In addition, to policy experts, the program included Delegate Maggie McIntosh, Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, and testimony by students. For a video of the event, [click here](#).

The event was a call to action to support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future for a COMAR (Maryland State Standards for Education Title 13A) aligned, world class public education. In about a week, we expect the House of Delegates to convene to override the veto of HB 1300 the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and revenue bills. Watch for information on the [Education Action Blog](#) and for Action Alerts for additional legislation such as a Correction Bill needed because of implementation delays. There will also be legislation to address learning loss due to Covid and the digital divide.

Submitted by Lois Hybl

Winter Workshop



The League Hosted a lively Winter Workshop on January 30th. About 164 people from across the state attended virtually!

Elaine Apter and her Committee did a fantastic job presenting the background and facts behind the upcoming **Initiative Consensus Study** which looks at whether or not Maryland should institute a citizen's initiative process and whether it should be direct or indirect. Initiatives allow citizens to propose statutes or constitutional amendments that are to be placed on the ballot for consideration by voters following a process of gathering signatures. There were a lot of great comments and questions, and I urge you to click on the links below if you were unable to attend or want to read up on it.

1. Some of the recorded [Chat comments](#);
2. Click here for the [Initiative slides](#);
3. The [video recording](#) of the Initiative presentation; and finally
4. Click here for the Final version of the [Initiative Fact Sheet](#) (A fillable version of the Fact Sheet will be sent to local Leagues.)

To line up help from a member of the Initiative Study Committee with your local League's presentation, [email Elaine Apter](#).

After a short break, **Nancy Soreng** presented a great program on Police Reform efforts in the State of Maryland. In June 2020, the LWVUS agreed that police reform and the elimination of systemic racism was warranted and supported. [The Maryland Coalition for Justice and Police Accountability](#) has developed 5 key issues they want to see addressed in the current General Assembly - you can click on each link for a video and a one page fact sheet on each initiative:

1. [Repeal the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights.](#)
2. [Restore Control of the Baltimore City Police Department to Baltimore City](#)
3. [Make Investigations into Police Misconduct Transparent](#)
4. [Limit the Use of Force by Law Enforcement](#)
5. [Remove Police Officers from Our Children's Schools](#)

The legislation which currently accompanies these initiatives, and which LWVMD supports, are the following:

1. [SB 626](#) / [HB 139](#) - Law Enforcement Officers - Use of Force
2. [SB 627](#) / [HB 151](#) - Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline
3. [SB 178](#) / [HB 120](#) - Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Investigations of Law Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law)
4. [HB496](#) - Primary and Secondary Education - Mental Health Services - Expansion (Counselors Not Cops Act)

Program Report for January

New LWVMC Office: The Montgomery County LWV has moved! We are excited about our new home. The office is located in the Nonprofit Village which gives us access to amenities such as large and small meeting rooms, internet, IT services, workshops, a receptionist and more which should increase LWVMC's office efficiency. The location will also give us a chance to collaborate with other non-profits. The new address is 15800 Crabbs Branch Way, Rockville.

Voting in the Next 100 Years: Maryland Women's Heritage Center presented a panel discussion on "Voting in the Next 100 Years," on January 28th. **Alice Giles** from the Howard County League and **Elaine Apter** represented the League. The rest of the panel included elected officials and civic organizers. The discussion was very lively and informative and included topics such as the First Amendment, getting out the vote, civic education, and the importance of inclusion in any program.

Initiative Study: Thanks to all who attended the Initiative Study briefing! Watching the comments from the attendees, it looks like we will have some lively meetings. Again, if you would like a member of the committee to join your consensus meeting email me at eaapter@lwvmd.org. **The deadline for submitting your consensus reports to me is April 16.**

Program Planning: The deadline for Local Leagues to submit their Program Planning report forms is February 26, 2021. I hope to present the results at the March 20th Board meeting so that we can come up with recommended program items for the 2021 Convention.

I know it has been a busy few months for programs. My thanks to the committee members of our two consensus studies and all the local League members who organized, presented or will present and especially for the members who attended or will attend these meetings. It is important in consensus that we have a good representation of the views of members throughout the state.

Elaine Apter, Program Chair

Legislative Update

This past month our newly formed Advocacy Teams have been busy tracking legislation, while submitting written and/or live "zoomed" testimony on all of our key legislative priorities. Our new this year [blog](#) has been well received with some great Issue Papers as well as some legislative updates. Click on the links below for the most recent written testimony.

House Bills:

[HB 496](#)- Primary and Secondary Education – Mental Health Services – Expansion (Counselors Not Cops Act)

[HB 114](#)-Maryland Transit Administration - Funding (Transit Safety and Investment Act)

[HB 419](#)-Economic Development - Advanced Clean Energy and Clean Energy Innovation Investments and Initiatives

[HB 424](#)- Public Financing Act –Matching Fund Revisions (Maryland Fair Elections Act)

[HB 435](#) – Millionaire's Tax

[HB 655](#) Local Government – County Commissioner Elections – District Voting

Senate Bills:

[SB 72](#)-Open Meetings Act - Requirements for State Agencies and Local Boards of Elections (Maryland Transparency Act of 2021)

[SB 511](#)-Corporate Fairness Act of 2021

[SB 627](#)- Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights - Repeal and Procedures for Discipline

[SB 29](#)- Election Law-Voting - Elections by Mail, Polling Places, and Early Voting Centers

[SB 283](#) – Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

[SB 158](#) – Election Law – Time Off for Employee Voting

[SB 224](#) Election Law – Correctional Facilities – Voter Registration and Voting

Want to see what LWVMD has advocated for in the past? Check out our [testimony](#) page. We will be updating this weekly during the 2021 session!

We look forward to keeping you in the loop about what's happening in Annapolis this year! Also consider following us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to keep up to date with [events](#), [action alerts](#), and other important information as it happens.

Save the Date!! LWVDM Virtual Day on Capitol Hill - April 29



LWVMD is planning another **Virtual Day on Capitol Hill for Thursday, April 29**. This is also the LWVUS “Day of Action” and will most likely be focused on voting rights, including the “For The People” Act (H.R.1/S.1, the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act), and D.C. statehood.

As we did last year, we will use Zoom for a series of meetings with the Maryland Congressional delegation of roughly twenty minutes each, including time for us to make our pitch and engage in some question and answer with our representatives (or their staff).

A link for sign-up will be included next month.

If you have questions, please contact Jackie Coolidge: jcoolidge@schoolbench.com

We realize that our work to make a difference and affect positive change through legislation not only affects our League members and the communities, they reside in, but it affects our neighbors throughout the state of Maryland. We appreciate the dedication and the wealth of knowledge that our LWVMD members exhibit. They are ordinary people from various backgrounds who strive to make a difference with others who share the same common goal which is to empower citizens to shape better communities.