

State Board Letter

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LWVMD

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LWVMD Calendar

- | | | |
|------------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dec | 7 | Rally against Independent State Legislature Theory
US Supreme Court, 9am
- training on December 6 at 5:30pm |
| | 10 | Program Planning information meeting
virtual, 10am |
| | 10 | LWVUS Annual Survey data due |
| | 10 | Human Rights Day |
| | 12 | Civic Education and Youth Engagement working group meeting
virtual, 10:30am |
| | 16 | Making Sense of Our Civic Language webinar
virtual, 11:30am |
|
 | | |
| Jan | 1 | New Year's Day |
| | 11 | MD General Assembly begins |
| | 14 | Local League Presidents' Meeting
virtual, 10am |
| | 16 | Martin Luther King, Jr., Day |
| | 21 | LWVMD Winter Workshop
virtual, time TBD |
|
 | | |
| Feb | 1-28 | African American History Month |
| | 6 | Legislative Day
location TBD, 10am-12:30pm |
| | 8 | Deadline for local Leagues to submit Program ideas and proposed Position changes to LWVMD |
| | 20 | Presidents' Day |

The SBL is a monthly LWVMD publication that seeks to strengthen understanding and collaboration between the Board and local Leagues statewide

President's Message

Once again, now that the 2022 election season is over, I want to express my gratitude to all of you for your efforts to educate voters about the candidates, ballot questions, the election process and truth verses mis-information. Producing [Vote411](#), print versions of the Voters' Guides, and candidate forums requires time, knowledge, skill and dedication. Thanks for all you did.

We all know that attempts to undermine trust in our election process are a threat to the very foundation of our democracy. However, voters from **all parties, as well as those who had chosen not to affiliate with a party**, showed out in record number on November 8 and rejected the premise that our elections are rigged. I am so grateful that the citizens of the United States are more informed and more dedicated to the underpinnings of democracy than many pundits predicted. I like to think that efforts of League members across the nation had something to do with the resounding rejection of the idea that

our government is not to be trusted and elected officials, not the voters, should determine the outcome of elections.

Now that the election is over, we are on to the business of supporting public policy that aligns with League positions and principles. We have held two briefings for those interested in working on an advocacy team to impact legislation that will be proposed in the 2023 session of the General Assembly. If you weren't able to attend either of those, but are interested in being an advocate, please write to us at Action@LWVMD.org.

And finally, as we come to the end of 2022, I want to wish each and every one of you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season and best wishes for a Happy New Year.



LWVMD President Nancy Soreng

State Board Meeting Highlights

On **December 10 at 10 a.m.**, an informational zoom meeting will be held to provide information for 2023 program planning. This is an important part of developing the program for 2023-2025 that will happen at the LWVMD Convention in May. If you want to participate in the meeting or have questions about program planning, contact Linda Kohn at lkohn@lwvmd.org.

The next local League Presidents' Meeting will be Saturday, January 14 at 10 a.m.

The LWVMD would not be able to fulfill our sacred mission of Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy without the help of our supporters. For this reason, as 2022 draws to an end, please consider donating to the LWVMD as a year end gift. **This year, each donation will be doubled up to \$40,000 to ensure all work at the League is possible.** To donate via credit card, visit the [LWVMD website](#), or send a check to the LWVMD office at 121 Cathedral Street, Suite 2B, Annapolis, MD, 21401.

Stacey Morrison, SBL editor

Event

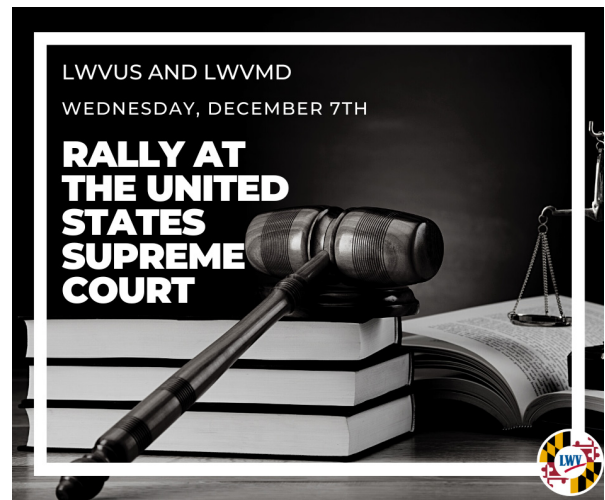
The LWVUS filed an [amicus brief](#) at the U.S. Supreme Court in the Moore v. Harper case against the “independent state legislature theory” (ISLT), a theory that would remove the checks and balances of our democracy and give state legislatures complete authority to rewrite the rules of how federal elections are run at the state level. LWVMD along with all other 49 Leagues in the nation, signed on to this brief. To better understand ISLT, watch this [video](#) from the Brennan Center for Justice.

Rally Against Independent State Legislature Theory

On December 7 when the U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments on the case, LWVUS is planning a National Day of Action starting at 9:00 a.m. in front of the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. They will also be scheduling an in-person training with a virtual option on December 6 at 5:30pm for people joining the rally.

To let LWVUS know that you are interested in attending please register [here](#). If you are interested in traveling to the event with other League members from Maryland, please also register [here](#). We will let people from similar parts of the state know about each other’s interest in attending. For more information, contact Soreng at nsoreng@lwvmd.org.

Nancy Soreng, President



Excerpt from [LWVUS 10-26-22 Press Release](#) on Independent State Legislature Theory:

“Giving states unchecked power to set rules for federal elections is an assault on the American voter,” said Virginia Kase Solomón, CEO of the League of Women Voters of the US. “Historically, state legislatures have enacted the most harmful and suppressive anti-voter laws, and pro-voter groups like the League have relied on the ability to fight them in state courts. The Independent State Legislature Theory is a dangerous, fringe ideology that leaves voters effectively defenseless from harmful election laws.”

The League of Women Voters has serious concerns about this case because a ruling adopting ISLT would give state legislatures nearly unrestricted authority to set the rules for federal elections, prioritizing the ambitions of politicians over the American voter. Furthermore, if the Supreme Court condones this theory, it will undermine the role of state courts to protect voters when politicians create unconstitutional barriers to voting, draw unlawful voting maps, and invalidate direct democracy efforts like ballot initiatives.

“In creating the US Constitution, the framers were intentional about establishing a checks and balances system to disrupt any one branch of government from becoming too powerful,” said Celina Stewart, chief counsel and senior director of advocacy and litigation at the League of Women Voters of the US. “Because state courts have been vested in the salient role of deciding disputes that govern our daily lives, any unraveling of this longstanding balancing would be a dangerous and historic blow to democracy as we know it. We implore the Court to rule in favor of voters and reject the Independent State Legislature Theory.”

As this case has massive implications for every state, the League of Women Voters amicus brief expresses the concerns of Leagues representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The League’s brief focuses on the practical, negative impacts that ISLT will have across the country. Specifically, the brief explores how implementing such a theory would create different election rules for state, local, and federal elections that would cause confusion for administrators and voters alike and would have a deleterious effect in maintaining free and fair elections.

Events

Making Sense of Our Civic Language

The words Americans use to describe, debate, and examine our civic values, ideals, and practices are also the words we use to connect, share, and co-create our community and national future. What can we know about how aligned we are on our language choices related to our civic lives? Perhaps a more important concern underlies this question: ***Are we talking past each other about values we think we share?***



In 2021, [Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement \(PACE\)](#) Funders partnered with Citizen Data to field a nationally representative survey of 5000 American voters and followed up with deep dive sessions, focus groups, mini-papers, mini-grants, and infographics to democratize the analysis process.

What assumptions about civic language were confirmed, challenged, or complicated by the data? And perhaps most importantly, what are the hard truths our data present that we need to face and wrestle with as a field?

Join us for a webinar presentation by PACE Funders as we engage all of these questions and more. To join the webinar, register [here](#).

PACE Funders' Civic Language Perceptions Project: Making Sense of Our Civic Language
Friday, December 16 at 11:30 a.m.

Genie Massie, Civic Education and Youth Engagement Chair

It is hard to believe the winter weather is upon us. However, the chill also means the LWVMD Winter Workshop is coming:

Saturday, January 21
9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

In addition to three breakout rooms and an in-depth look at our legislative priorities, this year's workshop will feature keynote speaker Kalman Hettleman, former member of the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (aka Kirwan Commission).

Details on breakout topics and location are still being finalized, but it has been decided that the meeting will be held virtually. More information will be sent via email and posted to the [LWVMD website](#) in the upcoming month. For more info please email stateoffice@lwvmd.org. We hope to see you there.

LWVMD Winter Workshop 2023



Committees

LWVUS is collecting data about state and local League activities from January 1 through November 8, 2022. **The closing date to submit responses is December 10**, and the first 400 Leagues who respond will receive a prize.

LWVUS Annual Survey

LWVMD encourages local Leagues to participate in this annual survey as LWVUS will use the data collected to promote each League's work to funders, understand how helpful each League has been, and learn what local Leagues think LWVUS could do to be more helpful to Leagues at the state and local levels.

Beginning on November 10, LWVUS began contacting an officer or officers for each League listed in the LWVUS Roster Manager Portal. If no officers were listed, then the email about completing the survey was sent to League-wide emails listed on the LWVUS database. Each League received a link to the on-line survey form that was unique to them.

For more information about this survey and what to do if your League hasn't been contacted and provided a survey link, please visit the [LWVUS' Annual League Survey website](#). You can also contact Mariana Schmalstig Diaz, Senior Manager of Evaluation, at mschmalstig@lwv.org.

The survey is long and should be completed by a small group of League leaders. Before submitting your responses on the form, please print out this [PDF](#) to help you determine your answers. Even though it is a bit time-consuming, this exercise will be a good opportunity to reflect on your many accomplishments during this busy election year.

Nancy Soreng, President

ANNUAL LEAGUE SURVEY


LWVUS's Annual Survey will allow us to tell our collective League stories.

LWVMD Civic Education and Youth Engagement Working Group Meeting

The December meeting for the LWVMD Civic Education and Youth Engagement group has now been scheduled:

Monday, December 12
10:30 a.m.


This virtual meeting is open to anyone interested in strengthening civic education in Maryland or working to shape our youth into informed and involved civic participants. If you would to join the meeting, please contact Genie Massey at gmassey@lwvmd.org.



LWVMD Civic Education & Youth Engagement Working Group

—
Collaborate with local League
members & LWVMD to amplify
our efforts across the state!
—

Contact: gmassey@lwvmd.org



Committees

LWVMD's Civic Education Update

Genie Massey, LWVMD's Civic Education and Youth Engagement Chair, helped spread the word about the League and [VOTE411](#) at several voter services events this fall. In October, Genie helped staff the [MD Civic Education Association's](#) table at the Maryland State Education Association's (MSEA) Annual Conference, where she passed out Voters' Guides, VOTE411 buttons, and voting related fliers to over 200 people. And on Halloween, Genie took part of Allegany College's GOTV event

Don't Boo, Vote! Thanks to her efforts, many more students and faculty members now know about the League and VOTE411.

Following the October 26 release of a draft [Comprehensive Implementation Plan](#) by the [Accountability and Implementation Board](#) (AIB), the Coalition for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future spent more than a week researching the draft and developing testimony to share with the AIB. The public hearing on the draft plan was held on November 10; to view the hearing, click [here](#).



Left: Genie Massey, at Allegany College's "Don't Boo, Vote!" Halloween event.

Right: voting swag at the MD Civic Education Association's MSEA table



Your nominating committee is charged with presenting a slate of names of leaders willing to fill the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer plus at least 9 additional Directors for election at this year's Convention on Saturday and Sunday, May 20-21, 2023. We have had some preliminary discussions with local League Presidents and we wanted to make these opportunities available to all of our members. There is a short [Google Form](#) to use to nominate someone you would like to see in one of these positions, or you can even nominate yourself!

Nominations are Open for Positions on the State Board

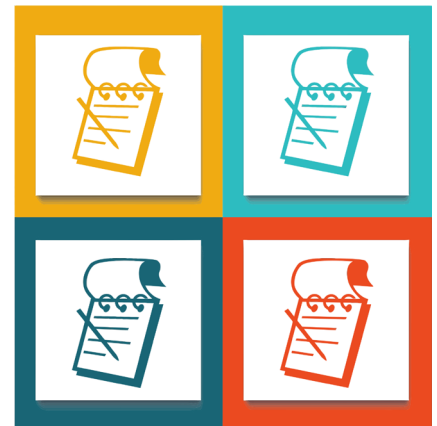
The nominating committee elected at our last Convention is chaired by Diane Hibino and Jane Hardy and include members Beth Hufnagel, Janet Bellizzi, and Richard Willson, the last two who are Board-appointed; LWVMD Executive Director, Nikki Tyree, also provides help to this committee.

Click on the links below to see job descriptions for each position. You can send questions to the committee at nominations@lwvmd.org.

LWVMD Board Positions

- [President](#)
- [Vice President](#)
- [Secretary](#)
- [Treasurer](#)
- [Director](#)
- [Membership](#)

Jane Hardy, Nominations Co-Chair



Committees

2023 Legislative Priorities

LWVMD stays committed to working on bills that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our members have determined the issues below are LWVMD's top priorities for advocacy in 2023.

Making Democracy Work

Protecting the Vote

Improving the Judiciary

*Other Issues:
Campaign Reform*

Social and Economic Justice

Affordable Housing

Health Care

Public Transportation

Education

*Other Issues:
Juvenile Justice*

Protecting the Environment

Reduce Causes of
Climate Change

Protect Clean Air and
Water

*Other Issues:
Land Use*



Committees

In the month of October, the League of Women Voters of Maryland launched its first-ever election inspired campaign called *Get to the Polls MD*. LWVMD encouraged Marylanders to get out (or stay in!) and log miles between October 1 and Election Day, November 8. With almost thirty participants we were able to log over 1,700 miles. Some of our participants were seen on social media and even recognized out and about in public!

Get to the Polls MD Wrap-Up

Throughout *Get to the Polls MD*, LWVMD was able to showcase not only its participants, but its countless efforts for getting people to the polls. We were able to uplift other organizations that we partner with, highlight rights every voter has at the polls, share important dates to remember, and most importantly draw attention to the League's Voter's Guide.

LWVMD set out to raise \$10,000 throughout this campaign and while we didn't quite hit that goal we did get very close. This money will go towards LWVMD's operations and furthering our mission of doing as much work around Election Protection as possible.

We would like to thank all those below who participated either as individuals or teams. Thank you for your time and energy in Getting to the Polls! And of course we would like to thank our donors. Your generous contributions encouraged and inspired our participants everyday. Thank you.

Nikki Tyree, Executive Director

GET TO THE POLLS PARTICIPANTS

Eight Paws for the Cause (Niecy and Jim Chambers)

Nancy Soreng	Ralph Watkins	Janet Bellizzi
Steven Bellizzi	Skyler Sale	Willow Goode
Donna Cawley	Kathy Ruckman	Barbara Flook
Kira Sconion	Genie Massey	Fran Peimer
Katherine Polevitzky	Serge Polevitzky	Marian Herb
Linda Reed	Jackie Adams	Sarah Mattingly
Kelley Gordon	Deborah Mitchell	Brendan Ryan
Elihu El	Shira Krishnan	Joanne Antoine
Kathy Skelton	Gwendolyn Levi	Casey Hunter
Connie Ranney	Cecelia Trainor	



Executive Director Nikki Tyree and staff of Common Cause



LWVMD member Ralph Watkins



LWV Anne Arundel County mall walkers

Committees

Voter Services Statistics

This Election season Marylanders (from all over the world!) kept LWVMD busy. Our [Vote411](#) platform was once again one of the most utilized and needed tools to help voters.

The League's website saw countless visits, but our Vote411 and Voter's Guides webpages specifically saw over 18,000 clicks and views. This came from a number of factors, but we at the State were pleasantly surprised by the amount of people who came to the LWVMD site by organically searching for our Voter's Guides or Vote411. This proves to us that the League is the pinnacle of what voters think of when they think of resources when deciding between candidates.

With Vote411 being one of the only reliable non-partisan platforms, it's no wonder that it received over 87,000 clicks from Marylanders. This represents people from just across the state. We are lucky enough to be able to break this information down by county and even towns in some cases. It's a firm example of why our local League's are so critical during these times in getting voter information out there. It also tells us what else we need to do and where we need to work more.

This year LWVMD was fortunate to be able to put our efforts behind two new mediums of advertisement. One of those was [The Baltimore Banner](#), an online newspaper, where we advertised three ads on their website, one on their mobile site, and one in their daily email newsletter that they call the *The Scan*. Through this campaign we were able to make over 176,000 impressions with their readers! Furthermore, we are happy to report that LWVMD surpassed *The Scan's* normal interaction rate by .05%. This no doubt contributed to the traffic on Vote411.

The second medium we used was social media. While we have utilized this avenue before, this year, along with our Get to the Polls MD campaign, the League made a concerted effort to push Voter's Guides and Vote411. We did this by purchasing ads on Facebook and Instagram. This translated to an explosive amount of traffic such as likes, shares, and engagement. Unfortunately, Facebook stopped allowing ads after November 1 due to the immense amount of election misinformation, but they did allow us to rerun ads they had already approved. In the ten days leading up Election Day, the League was able to make over 90,000 impressions on social media. We were ecstatic to learn that a large amount of these viewers are youth voters.

Around the state many of our local Leagues got out there to take on their own voter registration and services. Members everywhere took over community colleges, universities, farmers markets, and shopping malls to encourage voters to check out their local guides and find the best way to vote for them. [LWV Washington County](#) member, Genie Massey, attended a conference in Ocean City. Members from [LWV Baltimore City](#), including Vice President Deanna Ikhinmwini, answered the call from [Morgan State University](#) to educate youth voters and discuss the election. They even went viral on Twitter! Thank you to all the members who got out there to spread the League's mission.

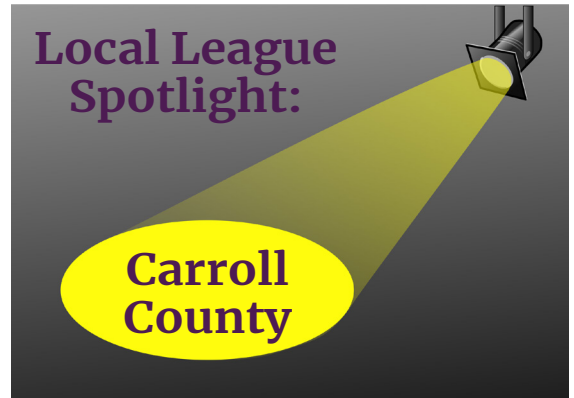
Nikki Tyree, Executive Director



LWV Baltimore City VP Deanna Ikhinmwini (r) at Morgan State University's School of Global Journalism and Communication voting event.

Spotlight

Two wonderful, enthusiastic League members, Cheryl Steinbacher and Jacqueline Slade, have stepped up to get the Carroll County League of Women Voters active again and to serve as co-presidents. Cheryl recently retired from a career in human resources, having worked in financial services, manufacturing, and high tech. Prior to relocating to Maryland in 2015, she had a long history of being involved with the LWV in Indiana and Tennessee. She considers her current work with the League, and other nonprofits, as her “encore career” and is excited about helping to grow the Carroll County League.



Jacquelyn Slade, LWV Carroll County Co-President

Jacquelyn is a second year student at Johns Hopkins University and the Peabody Institute majoring in Political Science and Jazz Voice. Jacquelyn has been a passionate activist, particularly for voting rights, since she was 15 years old. Notably, she organized a panel of women in government in local and state level positions from both political parties at her all-girls high school. She is also currently the Peabody Coordinator for Hopkins Votes. Jacquelyn feels the cornerstone of democracy is rooted in encouraging an engaged and informed electorate.

This burgeoning League was recognized in an October *Baltimore Sun* article about their participation in a march organized by the [Poor People's Campaign](#) to encourage people with low incomes in Carroll County to register and cast their ballot in this year's gubernatorial election. Additionally, the registered voters numerous times at

Carroll Community College and at the March for Choice and helped assemble a team who once again crafted the questions that were included in the Carroll County Voters' Guide.

Working with LWVMD Executive Director, Nikki Tyree, they have developed a colorful, informative membership brochure and have been reaching out to other community organizations to let them know about the rebirth of a Carroll County LWV and opportunities for collaboration. Working with their Social Media Team, chaired by Aileen Hepler, this League is also engaged in converting their dozens of [Facebook](#) group members to League members with the goal of reaching 30 paid members.

Having co-presidents who are a 20-year old John Hopkins student and a retired Human Resources executive has resulted in terrific learning opportunities and sharing of viewpoints. Both women bring unique skill sets, experiences and knowledge that when combined, will continue to make the organization more diverse and representative of our county, while creating a long-term strategy for growth.

Congratulations LWV of Carroll County!!!

Nancy Soreng, President



Cheryl Steinbacher, LWV Carroll County Co-President