

State Board Letter

Contents

- 1 Calendar
- 2 Presidents' Message
- 2 State Board Meeting Highlights
- 3 DEI Book Club
- 3 Legislative Day
- 3 Represent: Discussing the Documentary
- 4 Winter Workshop: Keynote Address
- 4 Winter Workshop: Program Planning
- 5 Winter Workshop: Civics on College Campuses
- 7 Marylanders for Open Government Summit
- 7 Redistricting: Ten-Year Plan

LWVMD

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MARYLAND

LWVMD Calendar

- Feb**
- 1-28 African American History Month
 - 8 Deadline for local Leagues to submit Program ideas and proposed Position changes to LWVMD
 - 15 *Represent* documentary discussion virtual, 7pm
 - 20 Presidents' Day
 - 27 Legislative Day virtual, time TBD
 - 28 DEI Book Club virtual, 4-5pm

- Mar**
- 1-31 Women's History Month
 - 1 LWVMD Civic Education and Youth Engagement Working Group meeting virtual, 10:30am
 - 28 DEI book club virtual, 4-5pm

LWVMD Issue Papers

The final LWVMD 2023 Issue Paper was published this month and all have been sent to members via email by Action Committee members. This year's papers cover topics such as campaign finance, transportation, juvenile justice, firearms, police accountability, and many more. The action teams encourage all League members to actively participate in LWVMD's legislative work by reading these papers, which can be found via email and on the LWVMD's [action blog](#).

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

President's Message

We had a great turn-out for our 2023 Winter Workshop. Thanks to everyone who took off a precious Saturday morning to learn about collaborating with local colleges to enhance civic engagement, program planning, and LWVMD legislative advocacy; see pages 4-5 for details. Our keynote speaker, Buzzy Hettleman, offered his perspective on the promise and challenges of the Blue Print for Maryland's future; see article on page 4. As we plan for the LWVMD Convention, we would love to hear your thoughts about workshops you would like to see offered there.

On February 14, we celebrate the 103rd birthday of the League of Women Voters which was officially founded in Chicago in 1920, just six months before the 19th amendment (giving many women the right to vote) was ratified. Over the last century, we've fought for election protection, democratic reforms, and equal access to the ballot all while maintaining our commitment

to nonpartisanship and fostering an informed electorate.

For this second century of our work, we have committed to expanding our vision of a more inclusive democracy where all Americans, regardless of gender, sex, race, ability, or party, can see themselves represented in our government. To build this vision, we bring an anti-racist, social justice lens to the issues of expanding voter access, fighting voter suppression, money in politics, and redistricting.

Each and everyone of you are a valued partner in this work! The sum of our collective efforts is so much more powerful than any of our individual efforts.

Happy Birthday Leaguers!



Nancy Soreng, President

State Board Meeting Highlights

February 8 is the deadline for local Leagues to submit their program input to the LWVMD. Please email your recommendations to Program Chair Linda Kohn at lkohn@lwvmd.org

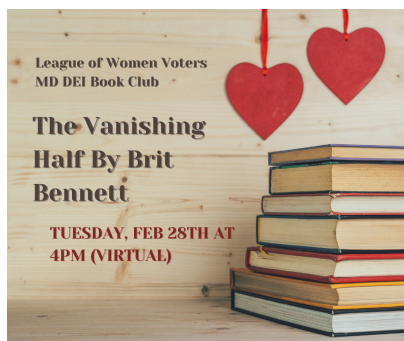
The LWVMD Nominations' Committee is working to develop a slate of potential board members for the 2023-2025 term. Any local League that would like to nominate one of their members to serve on the state board, please send that person's name to nominations@lwvmd.org.

Mark your calendars for the LWVMD Convention, which will be held in Frederick, MD, this year on **June 3-4**. Planning for this event is currently underway and information about the hotel, including a link to make room reservations, will be on the LWVMD website this month. There is still opportunity to help with the planning process, so if you are interested, please contact Nikki Tyree at stateoffice@lwvmd.org.

Stacey Morrison, SBL editor

Events

DEI Book Club



In February the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) book club will be reading *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. In this novel we will learn about two twin sisters living in the American South who take separate paths, but whose paths will cross again. Please join us as we continue to deepen our understanding of DEI.

Please join us to continue our knowledge and understanding of DEI issues by registering [here](#). As always all are welcome!

Tuesday, February 28, 4 - 5 p.m. (virtual)
***The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett**

Nikki Tyree, Executive Director

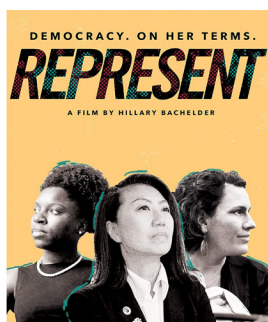
Each year LWVMD hosts a Legislative Day where members can connect with their representatives and discuss the League's advocacy work; this year LWVMD will once again offer Legislative Day virtually. Attendees will get an update from the hardworking advocacy team leaders on the progress of their advocacy during the 2023 Legislative Session. Details about Legislative Day will be on the LWVMD website shortly. For ore information, contact Executive Director Nikki Tyree at stateoffice@lwmvmd.org. We hope to see you there!

Monday, February 27 (virtual)
time TBD

Legislative Day 2022



Represent: Discussing the Documentary



Join the League as we discuss:

***Represent*, a documentary**
Wednesday, February 15, 7 p.m. (virtual)

The documentary follows three women running in the midwest to the lead up to the 2018 Midterms elections. This is a perfect documentary to exemplify the hard work many League members have been doing to defend democracy and empower voters.

A week before the discussion we will share a link for the film so you can watch it at a time that is convenient for you. This event is free and open to all! We hope to see everyone for engaging conversation. To view a trailer of the film, click [here](#).

Committees

Winter Workshop: Keynote Address



Last month's LWVMD Winter Workshop was an informative and engaging event where participants learned more about the LWVMD's legislative agenda, collaboration between LWVMD and community colleges around voter registration and engagement (see article on page 5), and the LWV program planning process (see article below).

Attendees also heard from keynote speaker Kalman Buzzy Hettleman, a learned person of and advocate for education policy who served as a Baltimore school board member, authored several books on public educational issues, and was a member of Maryland's Kirwan Commission. At the workshop, Hettleman spoke to attendees about the state of public education in MD, after which he fielded audience questions. To hear his presentation and the questions/answers that followed, click [here](#).

LWVMD's Program Chair, Linda Kohn, also led a break-out room discussion on program planning, where she described what comprises "program," how it gets developed, and when program decisions are made; click here to view the slides from this presentation. In general, program planning consists of LWVMD positions, proposed studies for possible new positions and action based on our positions. The LWVMD cannot take action on proposed legislation unless it has a supporting position for it at the state level or at LWVUS.

Program planning happens every year, but the focus alternates between LWVMD and LWVUS. In odd-numbered years, like 2023, the board reviews LWVMD positions and considers proposals for new studies that might lead to new positions; the timing coincides with the state convention. At the LWVMD convention this June, members will vote on current positions, proposed changes, and possible new studies to undertake. In even-numbered years, like 2024, program planning will include a review of LWVUS positions and any changes considered at the 2024 national convention.

Winter Workshop: Program Planning

A speech bubble graphic with a purple outline and a gradient fill. Inside the bubble, the text "Make Your Voice Heard" is written in a purple, serif font.

*Make Your
Voice Heard*

What do local Leagues need to do between now and convention?

1. By **February 8**, conduct any local meetings to review existing positions and determine if you want to submit any new study proposals. Send your input to lkohn@lwvmd.org.
2. Review the 2023-2025 recommended program proposed in the LWVMD's 2023 convention workbook, which will be distributed a month before the convention.
3. Attend the convention, in-person or virtually, and make your voice heard! Delegates will finalize the 2023-2025 program with their votes.

Linda Kohn, Program Chair

Committees

Winter Workshop: Civics on College Campuses

During the 2023 Winter Workshop, LWVMD Board Member Genie Massey led a panel discussion exploring collaborative voter registration and engagement programs with community colleges in Maryland. The panelists included Dr. Sarah Star, [Carroll Community College](#); Mark Berry, [Chesapeake College](#); Susan Albertine, LWV of Montgomery County; LWVMD member Diane McMahon, [Allegany College of Maryland](#); and Patrick O'Brien, [Frostburg State University](#).

Each of the panelists expressed enthusiasm for the potential of young voters and encouraged League members to build relationships with their local community colleges. According to the [NSLVE Data Portal at Tufts University Institute for Democracy & Higher Education](#), students attending 2-year colleges have had lower voter registration and turnout rates in comparison to their peers in 4-year institutions. As students work toward their degrees, the League can also support their efforts to be informed and active citizens in the community. Building relationships with faculty and staff can yield amazing results and support our mission to empower voters and defend democracy.



The LWV of Carroll County invited Dr. Star to speak at their fall membership meeting. Dr. Star's topic, *A Duty to Engage*, explored the hesitation many feel today when discussing politics with friends, family, and colleagues. Dr. Star shared in the Winter Workshop that Carroll Community College's Democracy Lab is a non-partisan initiative that hosts workshops and facilitates discussions to support the kind of candid and civil exchange of ideas that a healthy democracy requires. Community members are invited to get involved.



The LWV of Queen Anne's County was lucky enough to connect with Mark Berry who had done projects with the League in Delaware. Pat Jamison and Barbara Sharkey worked with Mr. Berry to produce a [voter registration guide](#) aimed at the campus community. Armed with this valuable information, League members attended events on campus to register new voters and answer questions about voting.



The LWV of Montgomery County (LWVMC) has had a long relationship with [Montgomery College](#) and offers voter registration and service learning opportunities on all three campuses. LWVMC volunteer and liaison with Montgomery College (MC), Dr. Susan Albertine, a retired English professor, has developed a varied slate of voter registration and voting outreach events for spring 2023 thanks to the relationships she has built with contacts on all three campuses, including student life offices, the library, and offices of community engagement. These activities are coordinated with the leadership of MC Votes, the campus organization charged with getting out the vote. Working with fellow League volunteers, Dr. Albertine helped to obtain a small grant from LWVUS to support activities on the three campuses this spring. Dr. Albertine has also updated information on the Montgomery College service-learning website to include the LWVMC as an organization that can offer service-learning opportunities for MC students. She and League colleagues are currently pursuing community-engaged research projects for students in a government class working with election turn-out data. She is also exploring ways that the League can support civic education efforts at MC. There is considerable potential for League collaboration of this kind with community colleges.

continued on page 5

Committees



Winter Workshop: Civics on College Campuses, Cont.

The LWV of Washington County has worked with [Hagerstown Community College](#) to strengthen voter registration and engagement efforts on campus. League member Genie Massey has coordinated to host voter registration events in the student center on civic holidays such as National Voter Registration Day and in the lead up to the 2022 Election. In addition, the Military and Veterans coordinator on campus included League volunteers at an open house for their participants. One tactic that has proven successful is to have printed voter guides on hand and access to a computer or laptop to showcase [VOTE411.org](#). Community members express appreciation when they see the brief responses of candidates side-by-side.



In western Maryland, League member Diane McMahon has included some fun in their voter registration efforts, planning an event on Halloween called *Don't Boo, Vote!* at which several faculty members performed live music, the choir sang several songs, and there was a photo booth offering patriotic props. Students participated in a Halloween costume contest; League member Genie Massey attended in a Statue of Liberty costume. With Voters' Guides and voter registration forms on hand, adult volunteers talked with students about the process of voting and how to get information about candidates.

Civics projects are not limited to voter registration. Allegany College has partnered with Allegany County Public Schools to host a celebration of service learning for high school and college students. This year, the event is expanding to include high school students from Garrett County!



Frostburg State University's civics and voter registration programs are led by Patrick O'Brien. In 2022, Frostburg students designed and hosted a gubernatorial candidate forum, recruiting the candidates to visit western Maryland. In addition to having voter registration drives, Frostburg AmeriCorps participants also engage in service throughout the region, supporting non-profit organizations with a variety of missions. Additionally, Patrick has worked with Frostburg's administration to facilitate transportation for student voters during the election to make dropping off a ballot or voting in person as simple as hopping on the campus shuttle.

Genie Massey, Youth Engagement and Civic Education Chair

Committees

Marylanders for Open Government Policy Summit

LWVMD along with Common Cause MD, the Maryland Delaware DC Press Association and ACLU of MD invited a network of organizations connected by their interest in fair and open access to government-funded data and information to attend this event in person in Annapolis or via Zoom. Attendees included members of environmental, public health, good government, consumer advocacy and social justice organizations. The four-hour event consisted of panels on Impacting Budget and Legislative Policy Decisions, Transparency and Police Accountability, Your Right to Know: Equitable Access to Records and a briefing on Remote Access to Court Proceedings.

Nikki Tyree, LWVMD Executive Director was a panelist on the Budget and Legislative session. She described the work she and others did over the summer and fall to convince legislative leaders to continue the advances in public access to the legislative process that were made during Covid. No longer will advocates be required to travel long distances to Annapolis, pay for expensive parking, and sit in hearings that can last for many hours in order to speak for 2 or 3 minutes. While in person presence at hearings is still encouraged, the option to testify via Zoom and to submit testimony remotely will continue. This is a great advancement to participatory democracy. Thanks Nikki!

Nancy Soreng, President

As one of the Maryland State Delegates to the General Assembly recently commented in regard to redistricting, “Didn’t we just do that?” Well, yes! Although the federal Census and thus redistricting won’t be done again until 2030, that only leaves us ten years to achieve a 2031-32 redistricting process that aligns with LWV positions. Generally, there is a lot of attention paid to the federal process of making maps for the Congressional districts, but redistricting, like so much of politics, starts at the local levels, and so does LWVMD’s [Ten-Year Plan](#).

Redistricting: The Long Game

The Ten-Year Plan includes a statement in which the LWVMD will: “Prepare and market an overview of the redistricting process in each Maryland county and municipality. There seems to be as many variations as there are entities doing it, from an independent advisory commission (Montgomery) to selection of Commission members by the County Central Committees (Howard).”

If you are the expert for your League on the local redistricting processes, please get in touch with Beth Hufnagel at bhufnagel@lwwmd.org to discuss how your municipalities and counties can be included in the LWVMD’s Ten-Year Plan. If you are a local League leader without a redistricting expert but are willing to find someone interested in learning about redistricting, please refer them to Beth, who will help coordinate redistricting efforts between the local and state Leagues.

Beth Hufnagel, Redistricting Chair



League members join other redistricting advocates at a redistricting rally in Annapolis in 2022