

State Board Letter

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LWVMD

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LWVMD Calendar

- | | | |
|------|-------|----------------------------|
| June | 1-30 | LGBTQ Pride Month |
| | 19 | Juneteenth |
| | 22-25 | LWVUS Council
Las Vegas |

Key Dates for LWVMD 2023-2024

- | | | |
|------|----|---|
| Sept | 18 | Constitution Day Program |
| | 30 | LWVMD Fall Workshop
9:30am-12:00pm |
| Oct | 2 | Maryland Charity Campaign starts |
| Nov | 28 | Giving Tuesday |
| Jan | 10 | General Assembly begins |
| | 20 | LWVMD Winter Workshop
9:30am-12:00pm |
| Feb | 14 | 104 th anniversary of LWV |
| Apr | 8 | General Assembly ends |
| May | 14 | Primary Election 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

I am honored to be writing this first message as president of LWVMD. When I was first approached to consider it, my immediate thought was that I cannot fill Nancy Soreng's shoes. Her energy, knowledge, and legacy make her a hard act to follow. But I am ready to try my best knowing three things. First, a great board of directors was elected, with a nice mix of returning and new directors. Second, members remain passionate about the League and what it stands for; when the world feels crazy, that is comforting. Third, Nikki Tyree, our talented Executive Director, will be our guiding partner in everything going forward, and will continue to be assisted by Administrative Coordinator Willow Goode.

As I've talked with people before, during, and after convention, I was frequently asked what my priorities would be. Despite it being an understandable question, I found it difficult to answer because we are a bottom-up, grass-roots organization. The members guide the priorities, and it is ONLY with member involvement that anything can get done. However, I do know that over the next two years, I want to leave LWVMD with as good a foundation as possible for the future.

That means making sound decisions in how we respond to the [LWVUS transformation](#), supporting focused fund-raising to garner support from people across the state who believe in the League, and thinking about some new ways for us to meet together and stay in touch so all members can find something that interests them. I will remain accessible to you all and open to your thoughts and ideas on how to make LWVMD the best organization possible.

John Kander and Fred Ebb wrote the music to many recognizable Broadway shows. In 1971, in one of their less-recognized plays, *70, Girls, 70*, they wrote a song with lyrics that I hope everyone will say when the League calls:

*"Say yes!
Life keeps happening every day,
say yes!
When opportunities come your
way,
You can't start wondering what to
say,
You'll never win if you never play,
Say Yes!"*



LWVMD President Linda Kohn

State Board Meeting Highlights

The board approved joining the [Marylanders for Patients Rights](#) coalition. The advocacy groups that make up this coalition helped secure the passage of the Hospital Patient's Bill of Rights in the 2019 Maryland General Assembly. To view the list of these rights, click [here](#).

Stacey Morrison, SBL editor

Staff and Events

This June, the LWVMD is fortunate to have Zaynah Rose join the administrative team as an intern for the summer. Zaynah is a graduate student studying Public Policy at the University of Maryland. She is also a member of Pi Alpha Alpha, a national honors society which promotes the study and practice of public affairs and administration. Previously, Zaynah has worked as a Congressional District Office Intern, and most recently she was a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging graduate assistant for the School of Public Policy at UMD. In the future, Zaynah hopes to do research and advocacy work around economic justice issues and families.



LWVMD Intern Zaynah Rose

**Welcome
Aboard to
LWVMD
Intern
Zaynah
Rose**

A Harvard Case Method Discussion on Madison's Federal Negative and the Making of the Constitution



The LWV of Anne Arundel County is again hosting a Case Method Institute program in collaboration with the Anne Arundel County Public Schools on:

Madison's Federal Negative and the Making of the Constitution
Thursday, June 22
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
via Zoom

The discussion will follow the Case Method, which engages participants in how to examine and respond to a situation in a specific moment in the American democratic process by putting themselves in that time and situation. In looking at Madison's proposal for a federal negative addition to the U.S. Constitution, participants will be asked:

"If you were drafting the Constitution, how much power would you give the federal government over the states?"

As a participant in this discussion, you will be invited to discuss the case materials, think critically, and learn more about our American democracy. You will be led by moderators from Anne Arundel County schools, Christina Sipe of Broadneck HS and Seth Wolak

of South River HS), and LWVAAC Case Method Project Coordinator Joyce Martin. This event is open to anyone, and may be of special interest to teachers of American history and government who may be interested in using this method in their classrooms.

After registering, participants will receive a zoom link for the meeting and access to case study materials. For more information, email Joyce Martin at secretary@lwvaacmd.org. Click [here](#) to read the event's flier.

Events

The [League of Women Voters of Maryland](#), For the People MD, and the [University of Maryland Carey School of Law](#) held a forum entitled *Crisis of Legitimacy and the Path to Reform* on Wednesday, May 3. The panelists were Mark Graber, University System of Maryland Regents' Professor and Constitutional Scholar; Leslie Proll, Senior Director, Voting Rights Program, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and Human Rights; and John Sherman, Litigation Director, Fair Elections Center.

LWVMD and Partners Host Supreme Court Forum

Professor Graber gave a quick history lesson on the structure of voting in the United States. Leslie Proll talked about the history of the [1965 Voting Rights Act](#) and recent and possible future actions by the Supreme Court to curtail protection of voting rights in our country. John Sherman explained the “shadow docket”, the way many election cases, sometimes hugely consequential cases, are decided without full briefing or oral arguments and without any written opinion. The reasoning for putting election cases on the shadow docket is that they must be decided quickly. The problem is that the court is not required to give any rationale for their decisions, which is required for cases on the normal docket.

Mr. Sherman also talked about [Moore V Harper](#), a case to decide whether a state's judicial branch may nullify the decisions made by the state legislature regarding how elections are conducted; this case resulted from a North Carolina gerrymandering case. Following that, the panelists discussed the recent decisions and practices of the Supreme Court that are giving rise to the lack of public confidence in the institution and possible remedies.

This event was recorded. To view this fascinating discussion, click [here](#) to access the video.

LWVMD member Nancy Soreng



Panelists (l-r): John Sherman, Leslie Proll, and Mark Graber; Host Peter Danchin, Associate Dean for Research & Faculty, UMD Law School; and attendees of the Supreme Court Forum held at Westminster Hall, UMD Law School in May 2023

Events

LWVMD Day on Capitol Hill Recap



On May 15, LWVMD hosted the MD Congressional delegation at the annual Day on Capitol Hill. Held again virtually, a format which started during Covid, has proven to be popular as it allows for more participation from members across the state. Almost 100 members registered, and about 40 participants attended each half hour meeting, with many people joining when their representative was speaking. Senators Cardin and Van Hollen, and Congressmen Raskin, Mfume, Ivey and Sarbanes all attended; the offices of Congressmen Harris, Hoyer, Ruppersberger, and Trone were represented by knowledgeable staffers.

The topic this year was the ever-relevant voting rights legislation, which faces even more obstacles this session than the previous one. While [H.R.1, For The People Act](#) (lead sponsor Rep. John Sarbanes), and the [John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021](#) had both passed the House of Representatives in the previous session, they were not able to overcome filibusters in the Senate.

Rep. Sarbanes promised that they are working on new legislation for this year, but everyone warned that nothing is likely to pass in the House of Representatives this year. Still, they will have fresh bills in both chambers and expect that the Senate in particular will hold new hearings about obstacles faced by voters in many states due to new state-level restrictions on voting which include overly strict ID requirements, restrictions on mail-in voting, racial gerrymandering, and other instances of voter suppression. The Supreme Court may also rule in favor of yet more restrictions this session which may in turn lead to proposed new congressional legislation to counter judicial tolerance for state level voter suppression tactics.

Rep. Sarbanes and others noted that, in terms of polling, voting rights has strong bi-partisan support, especially in regards to making it easier for people to vote, more credible drawing of congressional districts, and reductions in the influence of dark money. He said they would restore sections on ethics that had been stripped last year in a failed effort to try to gain more bi-partisan support. He said that Senator Klobuchar would be the lead sponsor on the Senate side, and they agreed they wanted to “keep it bubbling, in the hopper and on the ballot.” The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which had been merged with the stripped back For the People Act to create the [Freedom to Vote Act](#) in 2022, would probably go forward separately to ensure time for more Senate hearings.

Rep. Raskin mentioned that he hopes to introduce or support a proposed constitutional amendment that would explicitly guarantee the right to vote. In response to a question about the electoral college, he noted that Maryland has been a leader in the [National Popular Vote](#) compact, and said, “We’re two thirds of the way towards 270 electoral votes,” which would effectively ensure that the presidential candidate who won the popular vote would also receive enough electoral votes to win.

Senator Cardin, who had also been the lead sponsor of the bill to recognize the ratification of the [Equal Rights Amendment](#), noted the bill had majority bi-partisan support: 53 votes, but not enough to overcome the filibuster.

Senator Van Hollen said he supported a carve-out for the filibuster for voting rights, noting that it’s only a “Senate-invented rule” that should not block critical reforms after Senators had had ample opportunity to debate the issue; unfortunately, Van Hollen acknowledged, “We don’t have the votes to change the rule.”

All members stressed that they valued LWV as a very reputable, credible, non-partisan organization, and very much appreciate our strong support for voting rights reform.

**Jackie Coolidge, LWVUS
Lobby Corps Coordinator**

Members

The Annette and Malcolm Funn Award was awarded to 14 League members from across the state at the June 2023 LWVMD convention; see article on page 9. Members were chosen for the honor by their own Leagues. Each recipient is an outstanding League member, and all honorees represent the best of what Annette and Malcolm wanted to see. The honorees and the local Leagues that honored them were:

Annette and Malcolm Funn Award Winners

Honoree	League Affiliation
Carol Sures	Anne Arundel County
Paige Bacon-Ortiz	Baltimore City
Judith Miller	Baltimore County
Leonard Zuza	Calvert County
Marty Hankins	Carroll County (affiliate)
Claire Kondig	Frederick County
Jessica Fendryk	Harford County
Grace Kobofcik	Howard County
Jane Hardy	Kent County
Jean Halpin	Mid-Shore
Gretchen Blankenship	Montgomery County
Barbara Taha	Prince George's County
Mary Campbell	Queen Anne's County
Judith Osborn	St. Mary's County

LWVUS Adopts Two New Responsibilities Policies

Over the past year, the LWVUS Governance Committee has been developing a Member Rights and Responsibilities Policy that defines what it means to be a League member. They also adopted a League Responsibilities Policy. This past April, the LWVUS Board approved both policies at their spring meeting, officially putting them in place.

So, what does this mean for you? It means that the League now has a written definition of what you already do as a member of the League.

A member's rights policy like this is standard in a federated nonprofit organization like the League. As a member, you aren't required to sign anything or change what you do with the League. This just helps to define our shared understanding of what League membership means.

The member's rights policy was developed through many years of research, legal review, professional consultation, and LWV member input. You are encouraged to read the policy and the accompanying explanatory documents on the League Management site [here](#); the adopted League Responsibilities policy can found [here](#).

LWVMD member Nancy Soreng

Members

Earlier this month, participants of the LWVMD 2023 Convention voted in a new slate of officers who will serve as the League's Board of Directors and Nominating Committee during the 2023-2025 League years. Thanks to the work of the Nominating Committee, the board is a good mix of returning and new members, ensuring there is both continuity as well as new energy and perspectives for the board. Congratulations and thank you to everyone who has agreed to serve in these crucial positions.

Meet LWVMD's New Leaders

Board of Directors

Position	Member	League Affiliation
President	Linda Kohn	Montgomery County
Vice President	Genie Massie	Washington County
Secretary	Richard Willson	Washington County
Treasurer	Janet Bellizzi	Calvert County
Member	Roy Appletree	Howard County
Member	Camille Brewer	Montgomery County
Member	Gail Clark Dickson	Prince George's County
Member	Nicole Drew	Montgomery County
Member	J. C. Hooker	Calvert County
Member	Deborah Mitchell	Prince George's County
Member	Cheryl Steinbacher	Carroll County (affiliate)
Member	Amanda Subba Rao	Anne Arundel County
Member	Gail Sunderman	Baltimore City

Nominating Committee

Position	Member	League Affiliation
Chair	Nancy Soreng	Montgomery County
Member	Beth Hufnagel	Howard County
Member	Sandra Raviv	Calvert County

Committees

Two New Studies Adopted at 2023 Convention

Part of the work at state convention is to adopt a program for 2023-2025. The process for doing that includes local Leagues reviewing existing positions. Sometimes an existing position has become outdated and needs to be re-visited, and sometimes a gap is identified. In those cases, a study is proposed so a committee can be formed to study the issue and prepare a summary of their findings for presentation to members with the potential for adopting a new or revised position. At the convention just held, two new studies were adopted. If you have an interest in joining a study committee on either one, please let us know at pres@lwvmd.org.

Study 1: Impaired and Distracted Driving

The current position is focused on drunk driving, although it is recognized that there are many sources of distracted driving, such as drugs, cannabis, or cell phones. A potential study could include a review of the factors that cause impaired driving; how enforcement is implemented and varies across Maryland; and options to address it. This study needs a chair/co-chairs and members to join it.

Study 2: Local Control of Education

The current education position has multiple components to it, including one part that states “continuation of local control over schools.” Given the passage of the Blueprint for the Future of Maryland, aimed at reforming education across the state, local Leagues stated the need to review only that portion, not the whole position. It is recommended that such a study define what is meant by “local control,” what is mandated by the state, and where flexibilities may exist for local input and direction. The study committee has a chair, Gail Sunderman of Baltimore City, and needs members to join it.

LWVMD President Linda Kohn and Vice President Genie Massey



Convention

A very successful state convention was held in Frederick, Maryland, on June 3-4, 2023, with over 100 participants who attended in person or virtually; this event was the first time members from across the state met in person since the 2019 convention. The convention had a packed agenda that was informative, productive, and also fun!

The informative part was delivered through a series of nine workshops that covered a wide range of topics, including: democracy at the precipice of Black and White; using LWV positions; polarization; energizing youth voters; election reforms; becoming invincible to defeat; voting and accessibility; health care and democracy; and why civics isn't taught. Some of the sessions were recorded, and those recordings will be shared with members after the summer. A big thanks to all the workshop leaders who each devoted time to prepare and present their sessions.

A productive meeting ensured that needed business got done. Participants adopted revised bylaws that included, among other things, two key changes: first, a clause permitting LWVMD to convene meetings using virtual and hybrid options in addition to in-person, a practice which started during the pandemic and which members felt was important to continue; and second, a reduction in the number of vice presidents on the board from three to one, which was done to establish a more manageable executive committee, and support recruitment to the board and succession planning.

Members also adopted a program for 2023-2025 that included two new studies. One study will be on impaired and distracted driving and another study will be on local control of education; see articles on page 8 for more information. An operating budget of \$180,750 was adopted for 2023-2024 with that includes a vigorous goal for fundraising. While LWVMD appreciates every dollar of support from members, it also wants to reach out to others who support the League's goals and appreciate the work the League does. Finally, participants elected a new board of directors that includes a nice mix of returning and new members; see article on page 7 for a list of officers. The continuity of returning members is

important, and so is bringing in new energy and perspectives. All were deeply saddened to learn that one of the nominated board members, Nancy I. Smith of Kent County, passed away shortly before convention. She truly loved the League and was looking forward to joining the board. She contributed so much over the years and will leave a gap for all who knew her.



LWVMD Convention 2023 Attendees conducting League business

LWVMD Convention 2023 Recap



*LWVMD Outgoing President
Nancy Soreng and Executive
Director Nikki Tyree*

LWVMD President Linda Kohn

Convention

LWVMD Convention 2023 Recap, Cont.

And now the fun part!! The Saturday night gala did not disappoint. Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-08) was unable to attend in person but sent a recorded message that talked about challenges to democracy the country is facing and the importance of the League in continuing to fight for equal voices and voting rights. He urged us all to keep up the work—the need is greater than ever.

The Annette and Malcolm Funn Award was given to 14 members chosen for the honor by their own leagues. Their son, Kelby Funn, attended the gala and spoke movingly about his parents' legacy toward civic health and improving society for all people; see article on page 6 for winners of this award.

*Annette and Malcolm Funn Award
Recipients join Kelby Funn following
the award ceremony*

*left to right: Jessica Fendryk,
Barbara Taha, Mary Campbell, Paige
Bacon Ortiz, Kelby Funn, Gretchen
Blankenship, Claire Kondig, Grace
Kubofcik, and Leonard Zuza*



The convention adjourned with thanks to all those who made it happen. The Frederick County League was a wonderful host and made everyone feel welcome. Nikki Tyree, Executive Director, and Willow Goode, Administrative Coordinator, made endless decisions to ensure everything went smoothly. And a lifetime of thanks goes to Nancy Soreng for the leadership and commitment she brought to LWVMD over so many years. Thanks to everyone who planned and/or attended the convention. See you all in 2025!



*LWVMD
Convention
2023
Attendees
enjoying the
Saturday
evening gala
event.*



LWVMD President Linda Kohn