

July 2025

STATE BOARD LETTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND



SUMMER 2025 ISSUE

Summer in Maryland is hot, and so is LWVMD! Your new State Board has met and is already rolling up their sleeves and getting to work. **Now is the time to get involved!** Every day we are hearing more and more from members everywhere, no matter how long they've been members, that they want to do *something*. There is no shortage of work and it's going to take all of us. Keep an eye on future SBL's to learn how you can get more involved.

UPCOMING LEAGUE EVENTS

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| AUGUST 26 | Women's (In)Equality Day |
| SEPT 16 | National Voter Registration Day |
| SEPT 27 | Fall Workshop |
| OCTOBER 24 | Advocacy Training Session 1 |

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Convention 2025 Wrap-up	02
SAVE ACT	05
Housing Study	06
LWVMD Board	07

MISSION AT WORK

LWVMD 2025 CONVENTION SUMMARY

2025 CONVENTION

June 8-9, 2025 turned out to be a glorious couple days in Kent Narrows for the LWVMD Biennial Convention. The meeting location featured lots of sunshine and water views for those who were able to be there in-person. Some members attended virtually and we worked hard to make sure that all attendees could participate fully.

We had a very full agenda, starting with the core business that needs to get accomplished. We approved a new set of bylaws. Only a few changes were required, mainly to comply with the new dues structure that has been implemented. Thanks to Richard Willson (Washington County) for chairing that effort.

We adopted a budget for 2025-2026, which is mainly flat from the prior year. While we expect a small increase in revenue due to the change in the dues structure implemented by LWVUS, dues will represent only about 16% of our budget. We must raise about two-thirds of our revenue (about \$128,000) to balance our budget and avoid taking money out of investments. Thanks to Cheryl Steinbacher (Carroll County) for chairing that effort.

We approved the program for 2025-2027, affirming our existing positions and adopting one new study on Housing. The priority for housing came from the reviews that local Leagues conduct on LWVMD positions and offering recommendations on where updates are needed. A chair and members are needed for this important study. Check out a separate article in this newsletter for more information and how to sign on. Thanks to Marian Herb (Kent County) for leading this effort.



MISSION AT WORK

2025 Convention Continued

Finally, we elected Officers and a new Board of Directors for the next two years. The Board has a mix of returning and new members—it's actually half and half! This offers a nice blend of continuity and opportunity for innovation. This outstanding group of people is the result of broad outreach conducted by the Nominating Committee, led by Nancy Soreng (Montgomery County). Thank you to Nancy and the Nominating Committee and thank you to the new Board for stepping into LWVMD leadership. A separate article in this newsletter introduces you to the new Board.

We had two breakout sessions that each provided good opportunities for discussion and trading ideas. One session focused on engaging in public activities in our local jurisdictions, whether participating in local rallies, conducting town halls, or engaging with local government. Thanks go to Nikki Tyree for leading that conversation. The other breakout session focused on moving from voter registration to voter education. The majority of voters register to vote either online or when they are voting. As a result, we have lost an important connection with voters. While we will continue to register voters, also need to expand our methods for reaching voters year-round. Thanks go to Vikki Jordan (Anne Arundel County) for co-leading this session with Linda Kohn.



We also heard from two dynamic speakers on the first day, who both talked about community organizing. The lunchtime speaker was Gwen Stembridge, Associate Director from Non-Profit Votes in Washington D.C. She discussed the work of Non-Profit Votes, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that helps nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services. One item she highlighted was their 2024 “Nonprofit Power Report” based on their work with 120 nonprofits across 9 states that engaged over 60,000 voters. They found that nonprofits saw a 10 percentage point boost in voter turnout compared to their counterparts in the same communities, and notably, even higher turnout gains were seen in historically marginalized groups, with young voters, low-income voters, and people of color. Because of their deep roots in the community, local nonprofit organizations are trusted messengers for the people they serve.

MISSION AT WORK

LWVMD Convention Continued

At dinnertime, we heard from Elyssa Feder, Executive Director, Rising Organizers, in Washington D.C. Rising Organizers is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that trains everyday people in community organizing and civic engagement skills. Elyssa told us her own story on how she became a community organizer and described her approach which emphasizes making connections and working with other groups and individuals to make change around a priority issue. She strongly believes that everyone has the ability to create change.

Linda Kohn, as continuing LWVMD president, noted how she hopes in the coming term to be able to conduct some professional training for League members to get comfortable with the concept of community organizing and how to apply it within their own communities.

In the morning of the second day, Gail Sunderman (Baltimore City) presented the findings from a recently completed study on financing education and which she served as Chair. The topic in question is what is meant by “local control” when it comes to financing education. This study was adopted at the 2023 convention, in part, because the current position was seen as needing an update given the passage of the Blueprint for the Future of Maryland, an effort to transform public education in Maryland and increase state funding for education over the next 10 years to enrich student experiences and outcomes and improve the quality of education overall.

Gail reviewed the details of this complicated study and responded to questions. As often happens, simple questions often have complicated answers. The study report, slides used at the convention and a reporting form will be shared with local Leagues so each can have their own meetings and determine if there is consensus for a proposed change in our current position on the issue. Each local League is to return one form indicating whether the proposed change is supported (or not) and in the fall, the state will establish a consensus committee to receive the input and determine if there is consensus across the state for the change. If so, the recommendation will go to the Board for adoption and the position, as revised, can be used in advocacy starting with the 2026 session of the Maryland General Assembly. If there is not consensus, the position will stay as it is currently written. Look for a local meeting of your League on this important issue. Thanks go to Gail and the entire study committee for their efforts on this.

No new business was introduced and after receiving directions to the Board, the 2025 Convention adjourned. Special thanks go to Liz Hammond, Pat Jamison and Barbara Sharkey of the Queen Anne’s County League for their work in hosting an outstanding convention.

MISSION AT WORK

COULD YOU BE AFFECTED BY THE SAVE ACT?

COULD YOU BE AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSED SAVE ACT?

We need your help! The League is pushing back against the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act, which would require citizenship documentation to register to vote even though voters in every state are already required to affirm or verify their citizenship status when registering.

The SAVE Act would create one more barrier to the voting process, as many eligible voters do not have easy access to the necessary documents.

LWVUS is looking for stories of League members who could be impacted by the SAVE Act to help us show how this law would harm voters.

We want to hear from any member (or voter) who is a US Citizen and fits the following criteria:

1. They lack easy access to documentary proof of citizenship (no valid passport or birth certificate)
 - a. Married/divorced women whose documents do not reflect correct current names
 - b. Trans individuals whose documents do not reflect their current names
 - c. Older people who don't have access to citizenship documents
 - d. Lower income people who do not have and can't pay for citizenship documents
 - e. People who may have lost documents in floods or fires

OR

1. They have a physical limitation that will make it challenging to travel and present documentary proof of citizenship to their local election office in person.
 - a. Someone homebound or with a physical disability
 - b. Someone in a care facility or institution (including prison for states that allow voting)
 - c. Someone in a rural area very far away from an election office

In addition to meeting #1 or #2 above, the person is either:

1. Not yet registered to vote, such as high school students, young voters or new citizens

OR

1. Likely to (or could) move in the future, such as renters, college students, retirees, low income voters, federal workers.

If you or someone you know is directly impacted please reach out to stateoffice@lwvmd.org

HOUSING STUDY

INTERESTED IN HOUSING ISSUES? JOIN A NEW LWVMD STUDY COMMITTEE

At the 2025 LWVMD Convention, a new study was adopted on Housing. This topic was recommended by local Leagues through their biennial review of LWVMD positions. In their input, members highlighted the lack of affordable housing along with related concerns regarding landlord/tenant relations, eviction policy, redlining, zoning, disability accessibility, and discrimination. You don't have to have deeply studied the issue to be aware of ongoing reporting about the lack of affordable housing for the most disadvantaged populations as well as for younger adults seeking to purchase a first home and unable to get into the market. The topic is huge and the study committee will determine the scope and direction of the work to be undertaken.

If this issue is of interest to you, please consider joining this study committee. No experience is needed—just an interest in the topic and a willingness to learn more. Members across the state are welcome and, because members are spread out across Maryland, meetings are typically held by Zoom. A committee chair/co-chairs are not yet identified so that is also an opportunity to step up. As we are just forming this committee, it will most likely start in the fall.

If you are interested, please reply to program@lwmmd.org.

MEET THE NEW LWWVMD BOARD

THE NEW 2025-2027 STATE BOARD!

President, Linda Kohn, Montgomery County

Vice President, Cheryl Steinbacher, Carroll County

Secretary, Maria Gonzales Jackson, Howard County

Treasurer, Janet Bellizzi, Calvert County

Elected Director, Marlene Durholz, Howard County

Elected Director, Nicole Drew, Montgomery County

Elected Director, Angel Lewis-Lee, Baltimore County

Elected Director, Gwen Levi, Baltimore City

Elected Director, Nancy Lynott, Queen Anne's County

Elected Director, Julia Nickles Bryan, Baltimore City

Elected Director, Sandra Raviv, Calvert County

Elected Director, Gail Sunderman, Baltimore City

Appointed Director, Amanda SubbaRao, Anne Arundel County

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Chair, Camille Brewer, Montgomery County

Elected Member, Lois Hybl, Baltimore County

Elected Member, Barbara Crain, Baltimore County

Board Appointed: TBD

Board Appointed: TBD

Ex Officio, Nikki Tyree, Executive Director

THE LWVMD STORE

Support LWVMD in Style!

100% of the profits from your purchase goes directly to helping The League advance its mission of Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy.

www.LWVMD.Printify.me



NEW IN THE STORE



**EMBROIDERED
SWEATSHIRT**



**USE YOUR VOICE
T-SHIRT**



**DEMOCRACY
HOODIE**

SHOP OUR COLLECTION

With stylish apparel, accessories, and perfect gift items, our merchandise collection has something for everyone. Browse our full product line-up in the LWVMD Online Store!



LWVMD.Printify.me