

October 2025

STATE BOARD LETTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND



DON'T GET SPOOKED! VOTE!

Feeling scared? With all the turmoil in the world it might seem easy to feel unable to move. Whether it's stunned silence or you don't know where to start, LWVMD is here to help!

In this issue you will find ongoing projects that you can be part of, or issues that LWVMD will be taking on that you can join. Reach out any time and you'll never be able to say "I don't know what to do about this" again.

"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."
— Jane Goodall

UPCOMING LEAGUE EVENTS

OCTOBER 7	Book Talk: Spell Freedom
OCT 6-10	Voter Education Week
OCTOBER 24	Advocacy Training #1
ONGOING	In-District Training Meetings

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Linda Kohn, LWVMD President

LET'S HANG TOGETHER AND HANG TOUGH



“If we routinely change positions based on the news, we lose our foundation and don’t really stand for anything.”

I’ve been in a few meetings recently and can hear directly how worried people are right now for the country. People on all sides of the aisle are concerned about so many national issues. We read news and see videos of the aggressive tactics being used on immigrants, federal troops are being deployed in US cities, and steady pressures on voting access, including through redistricting battles that are happening across states. Women have lost rights, people are losing health care, children are going to miss meals. Your list may look different, but on some days, it’s hard to see how this country will get past today’s tensions. It is so far from the civil discourse that League has always stood for.

On any given issue, I hear members say LWVMD needs to weigh in, or our positions are too weak for today. Keep in mind the League structure—LWVUS responds to national issues, LWVMD responds to state issues, and local Leagues respond to local issues. Maryland cannot comment on redistricting in California or Texas. Our focus is on Maryland. So what can you do?

Take advantage of the League structure and get involved at different levels. I know members who are involved at the national, state, and local levels simultaneously. Some members only participate at their local level; some only participate at the state level. When you join LWV, you are automatically a member at all levels, so it’s your choice. Recognize that League positions—at any level—are based on studies conducted by members and approved by members. They cannot be changed or updated without member involvement. If we routinely change positions based on the news, we lose our foundation and don’t really stand for anything. If it helps, focus on the larger mission—defending democracy, protecting the right to vote, a representative government that functions within a constitutional framework, and social and economic justice. Those are the reasons I joined the League.

What’s most important is that we all remember that now is the time for us to hang together and hang tough. Our fight is not against each other. The real target is illegal, unjust, and undemocratic actions. Now is the time to lean on each other, trust ourselves, and work together.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Get Involved with The League!

SCHOOLS THAT BUILT THE
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Spell Freedom



BOOK TALK: SPELL FREEDOM

Tuesday, October 7th, 7:00 PM

Join LWVMD, writer Elaine Weiss, and professor and radio host Dr. Whitehead in a conversation of Weiss's new book *Spell Freedom* - the historic tale of the brave Black Americans who took on voting schools in the Jim Crow south.

Register Here:

https://www.lwvmd.org/book_talk_spell_freedom

ADVOCACY TRAINING #1

October 24th 3:30 PM

Join LWVMD for our annual Advocacy Training to learn the basics of how things work in Annapolis. This is the first step into becoming a League advocate or just broadening your knowledge during these political times.

Register Here:

https://www.lwvmd.org/advocacy_training_1



IN-DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

Ongoing - Every Friday

LWVMD is calling on ALL members to join us on Fridays to thier state Senator and Delegate(s) to discuss 2-3 ongoing priority legislative issues. Now is the time to get involved in your democracy!

Register Here: <https://www.lwvmd.org/districtmeetings>

MISSION AT WORK

Committee Updates: Action

GEARING UP FOR THE 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

On October 1, the team leaders for our Advocacy Teams met with the Action Team (the group that plans training and guidance for our volunteer advocates) to begin preparation for the legislative session that opens on January 14th. This year will be especially challenging!

On October 24th, LWVMD will host the webinar *Everything You Want to Know About the Maryland General Assembly (But didn't know who to ask)*. This webinar is open to anyone who wants to learn more about how Maryland's laws are passed – or not passed. One does not have to be contemplating being a volunteer advocate to attend or be a member of the League – just have an interest in how a bill becomes a law. While we have been hosting this every fall, the participants and presenters bring new information and insights each time it is presented. To register for this free event, [click here](#).

This event will be followed by two more webinars. On November 21st, we will take a deeper dive into strategies for being an effective advocate, and on January 9th, we will get into the nuts and bolts of LWVMD protocols and procedures for being a volunteer advocate. Watch the LWVMD website and emails for registration information.

For more information please contact Nancy Soreng at nsoreng@lwvmd.org



GET INVOLVED

Info: Email nsoreng@lwvmd.org

Info: Visit www.lwvmd.org/action

Info: Reach out to your local League to see how else you can get involved!

MISSION AT WORK

Committee Updates: Democracy Dialogues

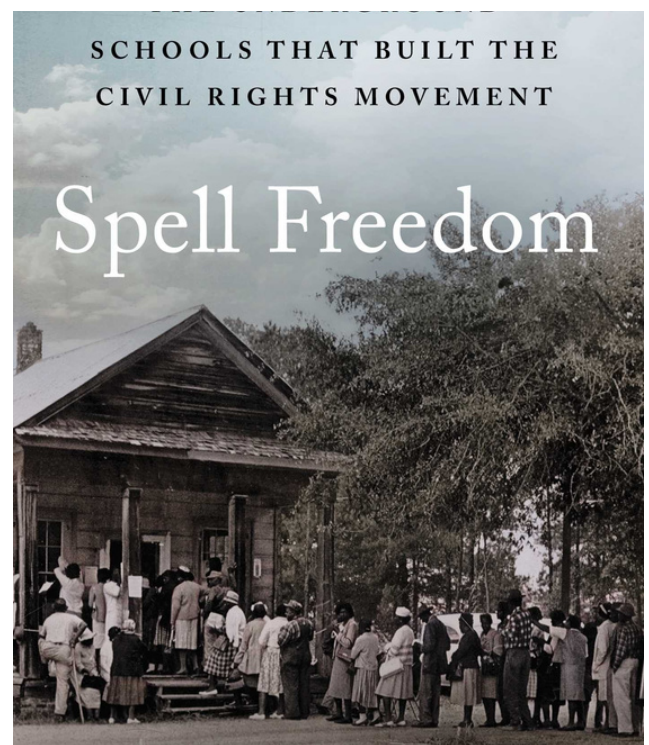
DEMOCRACY DIALOGUES—A NEW LWVMD INITIATIVE

On October 7, Elaine Weiss, award-winning Baltimore author of *Spell Freedom: The Underground Schools that Built the Civil Rights Movement*, and moderator Dr. Karsonya Whitehead, professor of communications and African and African American Studies, Loyola University joined us for the inaugural Democracy Dialogues event. *Spell Freedom* is a powerful, intimate, and enlightening book that tells the remarkable story of how a group of educators and their allies worked together to advance Black citizenship rights in the Jim Crow South. In a lively discussion, Ms. Weiss and Dr. Whitehead revealed the parallels between our past and the present challenges facing the country. A recording of the event will soon be available on the LWVMD website.

LWVMD, wanting to expand its voter education work, initiated Democracy Dialogues in fall 2025. Democracy Dialogues is focused on providing non-partisan information on a range of current topics, with a particular focus on how they impact Maryland. The goal is to engage, connect, and inform LWVMD members and the public.

This is a new committee and is looking to grow and develop members who want to get involved to have a helping hand in delivering on topics that Marylanders care about most.

If that's you please reach out to gsunderman@lwvmd.org



THINK NATIONALLY, ACT LOCALLY

Fall Workshop 2025 Wrap-Up

LOCAL ACTION, THE LEAGUE WAY

If you didn't make it the 2025 Fall Workshop held last weekend, the 27th, that's okay! LWVMD will be posting the recording soon, but in the meantime please look below for an article on part of the workshop where we discussed how to engage locally.

Why It Matters? It's your social cause!

Members, especially younger members, want to be able to quickly understand what social causes we stand for and if we're actively working on them. This could mean advocacy and rallies!

In order to do this here are a few key take aways:

- Learn all about our positions and how to dissect them.
- Apply the positions to advocacy, partnerships, and demonstrations.
- Know when one position will fit and when it won't.
- Most importantly: Do it! At some point you have to stop talking about and learning about it and you just have to do it!

When starting an advocacy program, or building on an existing one it's important to have a S.O.F.T approach.

- *S - Select*
- *O - Organize*
- *F - Focus*
- *T - Testify*

Select one piece of legislation that you and your League can get behind. Just one! **Organize** yourself around that issue. Do you want to join a coalition? Track the legislation? Start small. **Focus** on the legislation. If you're tracking it, just track that legislation. Do your best to not to get hung up the whole Council meeting. Then finally: **testify**. Write the testimony, whether you support or oppose, and get it turned in.

Thank brick by brick, not the whole house. Do not try to build an entire program. Just get started with one thing at a time.

Most importantly, reach out to LWVMD any time! We are always here to help and want to see as many members get involved in democracy as possible! The fall workshop will be available soon. You can find it at https://www.lwvmd.org/past_lwvmd_events

You can always reach out to at stateoffice@lwvmd.org

MISSION AT WORK

Committee Updates: Redistricting

SUPPORT FOR MID-CYCLE REDISTRICTING IS SUPPORT FOR GERRYMANDERING

Redistricting has been in the news a lot lately, mainly because it's happening in some states about 6 years early. There is no question that it is politically driven to alter the 2026 election results. I've been hearing directly from members who believe that LWVMD must respond by supporting mid-cycle redistricting in Maryland if we are to fight back.

LWVUS has stated its firm opposition to mid-cycle redistricting, which should only happen every 10 years and be based on the population, not partisan advantage, which disenfranchises all voters, but especially Black and brown voters. LWVUS guidance recognizes that redistricting is happening now and has stated that whenever redistricting is done, maps must be drawn legally, with public input, and with full transparency. However, we have still seen contrived and gerrymandered maps resulting.

Nikki Tyree, Executive Director, Nancy Soreng, Action Chair and past president, and Linda Kohn, current President talked about how to handle this issue in Maryland since efforts are building to introduce one or more bills in the next General Assembly session to undertake redistricting.

LWVMD's own position says that we believe that redistricting for the House of Representatives should occur only once every ten years after the census.

While we recognize these are not "normal" times, ultimately, we concluded that support for mid-cycle redistricting means support for gerrymandering, which we cannot endorse. It distorts representation and undermines democracy. In addition, we are deeply concerned when maps are drawn to target a single specific lawmaker who was elected (and re-elected) by the voters in that district. That disrespects the voters. Furthermore, rigging an election by drawing lines to select voters with a history that is perceived to be advantageous to one party is by no means a sure thing. Trusting the voter means we believe in the power of the vote and the right of the voters to have the ultimate say in who wins in any election. As an organization that believes in the power of the vote, we need to trust the voters and continue to make sure they are informed about the issues at hand.

We know that not all members agree with this. We are too big and diverse to have a uniform view on everything. Nor would we even want that. Redistricting is just one of several very tough issues we're facing these days. We also worry about deployment of troops to cities, aggressive immigration actions that destroy people's lives, drastic and unlawful efforts to suppress the vote—the list goes on. Depending on the issue, it is perfectly reasonable to work through LWV as well as with other organizations. What is most important is that you stay informed and engaged. Thank you for being part of the League.

MISSION AT WORK

Committee Updates: National News

DEPLOYMENT OF NATIONAL GUARD

We're sure that everybody is aware of the deployment of federal troops to US cities. Troops were sent into Los Angeles in June and have been in Washington, D.C., since mid-August. As this is being written, they are being deployed to Memphis, Tennessee; Portland, Oregon; Chicago, Illinois; and potentially to locations in Louisiana. In the past, there have been threats to send troops to Baltimore, and Maryland leaders quickly pushed back.

In each case, LWVUS has spoken out against this unjustified and uncalled-for action. LWV has called these deployments a dangerous march toward a military state and has condemned the weaponization of the federal military.

Because these are federal actions, LWV issues the statements along with the state League. LWVMD has been working closely with LWVUS, so we are prepared to respond should any troops move into Maryland. Hopefully, that day will not come.

LWV IS A CO-SPONSOR OF NO KINGS DAY ON OCTOBER 18

LWV is officially a co-sponsor of the upcoming No Kings Day Rally on October 18, 2025. Events will take place across the country and around Maryland. If you choose to participate, find a location near you at <https://www.nokings.org/>. This is a peaceful mobilization aimed at emphasizing that the power belongs to the people.

LWVUS President Dianna Wynn said the decision to join the sponsoring coalition for the second nationwide event was intentionally made "to stand in solidarity with partners and stand up against hate and authoritarianism."

Members can wear LWV shirts, pins, and other identifying items. Any signs or statements should be non-partisan and be consistent with League positions, focusing on actions and policies rather than on an individual. For example, a sign might convey a message about protecting the vote or free speech. We could not hold a sign advocating for 16-year-old voting because the League does not have a position on that issue.

This is a voluntary activity for those who choose to participate.

CONSTITUTION DAY

By Linda Kohn

LWVMD CELEBRATES THE CONSTITUTION

CONSTITUTION DAY COMMENTS, Sept 17, 2025

University of Maryland, Carey Law School

Every year, LWVMD co-sponsors a Constitution Day event with the University of Maryland Carey Law School. On behalf of LWVMD, Linda Kohn offered the following opening comments.

**How many of you could prove citizenship right now?
How many people here have a current passport?**

If you don't, how many of you can quickly access your birth certificate, either the original or a certified copy? These are the documents you will need to provide proof of citizenship if the SAVE Act, or Safeguarding American Voter Eligibility Act, passes this Congress. It has been passed in the House of Representatives and is currently in the Senate. Its provisions overlap with an Executive Order signed by the President in March, parts of which have been challenged, so it's in the courts.

These potential policies would require proof of citizenship when someone registers to vote or amends their registration, for example, due to a move.

Proof of citizenship would have to be presented in person at a government office. That typically means showing up Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., during business hours. So, you would either have to miss classes or work, or possibly arrange for childcare. Just to register to vote.

These policies are particularly burdensome for women. If you are married and have changed your name, your passport needs to match your current name. Your birth certificate likely does not list your married name, so you will also need to present your marriage certificate along with a government-issued photo ID.

Proponents argue that this is about election security and preventing noncitizens from voting. However, The Brennan Center (a progressive group) found a rate of suspected cases of non-citizens voting in the 2016 election to be 0.0001%. The Heritage Foundation, a conservative group, found 23 instances of noncitizens voting between 2003 and 2022. The Cato Institute, a libertarian group, said it's non-detectable. So this isn't about non-citizens voting.

CONSTITUTION DAY, PT. 2

By Linda Kohn

My passport has long expired. So I would have to get a new one, at a cost of \$165. Alternatively, I could get a copy of my birth certificate and marriage license, neither of which is from Maryland. Combined, it would cost me around \$50 for the copies, fees, and mailing costs. Getting documentary proof of citizenship would cost me between \$50 and \$165.

I don't know about you, but to me, that sounds a lot like a poll tax. Poll taxes are used to suppress voting. They were used in the Jim Crow South to suppress voting among Black Americans. They were banned through a series of decisions between 1964 and 1966. But here we are again.

Why did I go through this whole story? Because today's topic is about citizenship. If you think that questions about citizenship don't affect you because you are a citizen, think again. Currently, there are masked federal troops in Washington, D.C. They are setting up checkpoints, stopping cars, and asking for identification. And I don't think it's about whether you're old enough to drink.

I am delighted to be here on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maryland. This is a national, nonpartisan organization; we are present in every state and have been in operation for 105 years. Our mission is to empower voters and defend democracy. We were there when women won the right to vote in 1920. We were there in the mid-1960s for the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. Those were brutal fights, and unfortunately, none of those happened peacefully. I do not support or encourage any violence against anyone else, regardless of their views. We have seen too much of that, and it is rupturing in this country. But it is up to us all to speak up.

My father was a lawyer—my brother, cousins. You can imagine our holiday dinners. I asked my dad once why he became a lawyer. He said that because he wanted to help people who were in trouble. As lawyers and as future lawyers, you will be asked to speak for those who can't. Make. Yourself. Heard.



LWVMD members enjoying Constitution Day!



IN-DISTRICT ADVOCACY MEETINGS CAMPAIGN



LWVMD'S NEWEST GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN

LWVMD is launching a new advocacy campaign to bring our work directly to Maryland's 47 legislative districts — and we need you to make it happen. We're calling on our members to meet with their state legislators and speak up for the League's top priorities.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Meet with your state Senator and Delegate(s) in your legislative district (with assistance from LWVMD's State Action Committee).
- Share LWVMD's top policy priorities and why they matter to your community.
- Represent the League's values with confidence — we'll make sure you're prepared.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Complete the interest form to join the campaign: bit.ly/InDistrictAdvocacy

➞ WHAT LWVMD WILL PROVIDE

- **Fact sheets** and leave-behind materials on each priority issue
- **Sample scripts** and email templates for reaching out to your legislators
- **Training hours** via Zoom every Friday at 10:00 AM from August 29 to October 17
- **Ongoing support** from LWVMD's State Action Committee

➞ POLICY TOPICS

- **Special Elections:** Support a constitutional amendment requiring special elections to fill legislative vacancies — not insider appointments.
- **Plain Language on Ballot Questions:** Advocate for legislation that ensures all ballot questions are written in clear, easy-to-understand language.
- **Local Issue:** Your local League may include an optional, additional issue relevant to your community. LWVMD will provide a one-pager template and guidance.

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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!



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