

December 2025

STATE BOARD LETTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND



BURR... IT'S GOLD IN HERE

There must be some democracy in the atmosphere! The weather might be cooling down, but LWVMD is heating up. We are fully prepared to take on the 2026 legislative session, geared up for the 2026 elections, and ready to get Marylanders' voices heard through the whole process. Take a look at this issue to see what's coming up and how you can get involved!

"Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall." — Larry Wilde (American actor & comedian)

UPCOMING LEAGUE EVENTS

DEC 31	Cut Off for 2025 Year-End Giving
JAN 9	Advocacy Training #3
JAN 14	Start of 2026 Legislative Session
JAN 24	Winter Workshop

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Linda Kohn, LWVMD President

IT'S NOT TOO EARLY TO THINK ABOUT TURNOUT FOR THE 2026 PRIMARY

It's the December holidays, so it's too early to think about the 2026 elections, right? Nope. No way. Not at all. Nunca. Jamais. Niemals. Ichido mo nai. Jeoldae. Jue Bu.

The primary is scheduled for June 23, 2026, with early voting from June 11 to June 18. In the last gubernatorial election in 2022, overall statewide turnout in the primary was 27%. It cannot be attributed to unaffiliated voters who have limited participation in the primaries. In the same year, overall voter turnout was only 31% among voters registered with each of the two major parties. This means that under any assessment, 70% or more of voters who could vote are instead choosing to stay home. Appalling!

There are a lot of reasons why people need to vote in the primary. It shows family and friends that you care about the community in which you live. It shows that nobody can take your vote away from you. Because the primary sets the choices for November, the real competition among candidates is at the primary. It's the opportunity to vote for local offices (such as County Council or County Executive, or School Board) that affect roads, schools, and housing.

You can help by spreading the word about primary voting in 2026. We're asking local Leagues to reach out to other organizations and non-profits, especially those not in the "voting space," and make sure they have the needed information about the upcoming primary. You can do the same on your own. Talk to your neighbors, colleagues, the community, and religious groups in which you participate. Make sure they know about the primary and how to get nonpartisan information on Vote411.org. Always stay nonpartisan.

Our goal is to get more people and organizations talking about voting to their own audiences. Some members are very involved in their Leagues, others are valued members but less involved. This is your chance—no, it's your obligation—to speak out for democracy. Thank you.



“Because, as Thomas Jefferson reportedly said, ‘We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.’”

UPCOMING EVENTS

Get Involved with The League!



ADVOCACY TRAINING #3

9th January 3:30 PM

Join us for the final session of LWVMD's Advocacy Training series on Friday, January 9th at 3:30 PM.

In this virtual session, we'll walk through the LWVMD Advocate Manual, and unpack the nuts and bolts of advocacy.

Register Here: www.lwvmd.org/advocacytraining_3

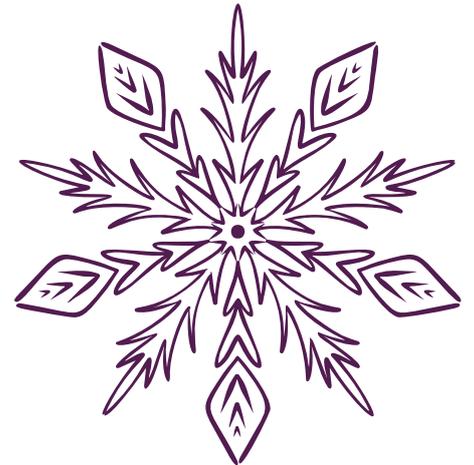
WINTER WORKSHOP

January 24th 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Save the date for LWVMD's 2026 Winter Workshop!

Hear from exciting speakers on the pressing issues facing our democracy today. Agenda to be announced soon!

Register Here: www.lwvmd.org/winterworkshop2026



LEGISLATIVE DAY

9th February 9:30 AM

Mark your calendar for LWVMD's annual Legislative Day!

Join us for this virtual event to hear directly from Maryland legislators about the critical issues they're working on, get updates from LWVMD's Advocacy Team Leads, and learn more about the League's policy priorities for 2026.

Register Here: www.lwvmd.org/legislativeday2026

MISSION AT WORK

LWVMD'S REMARKS TO THE GOVERNOR'S REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

The Governor's Redistricting Advisory Commission has been gathering public input on whether Maryland should redraw its Congressional districts before the next census, also known as "mid-cycle redistricting." Some other states have engaged in this process to develop new district lines to take effect before the 2026 elections. As this is being written, it is not clear what will happen in Maryland. To date, the Commission has held one meeting and two hearings—one on November 14 and one on November 18. A third hearing is scheduled for December 5, 2025. After that, the Commission will determine next steps, which could include a special legislative session in December to propose new maps or a decision to wait until the regular General Assembly session that starts in January 2026, or no action at the present time. LWV has a position on redistricting, so President Linda Kohn testified before the Commission at its second hearing on November 18. Her statement is included here.

I am Linda Kohn, President of the League of Women Voters of Maryland. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is the state's premier voting rights organization, supporting the right for all eligible citizens to fully participate in democracy, including through their vote. We oppose mid-cycle redistricting and do not believe it should be pursued. But if done, it should be conducted with maximum transparency, adequate time for community input, and a priority on the needs of Marylanders.

The League of Maryland opposes mid-cycle redistricting because maps are being drawn without new census data, and to favor one party. This distorts fair representation and creates confusion for both voters and candidates. In a time when there are already too many voices expressing distrust in the voting system, mid-cycle redistricting for partisan advantage will lead to an even greater loss of confidence in the system and the officials elected through it. It does not lead to "fair" maps, but rather, it takes away the power of voters.

If there is a decision to proceed, we believe the process needs to be transparent and community-driven. While this Commission has experienced and well-respected people sitting on it, it is not independent. Nor is the process transparent. We would expect to see widely announced meetings, agendas, and materials shared, and a clear plan of work and timeline delineated. We believe the process should be community-driven, with input gathered from citizens-at-large, public interest groups, members of minority groups, and voters in the potentially affected areas.

Elections rely on citizen participation. As a non-partisan organization, the League spends an enormous amount of our volunteers' time registering voters across the whole state and encouraging them to cast their ballots. Our aspirational goal is to get 100% percent turnout at elections. But when politicians choose their voters instead of voters choosing their leaders, we have weakened what citizen participation means and what a vote means. Thank you for letting the League speak today.

MISSION AT WORK

Committee Updates: Action

HOW IS LWV ORGANIZED AND WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?

Nikki Tyree, Executive Director, has been doing an orientation for LWV for any member to attend. These occur on the first Monday of the month, by Zoom, and do not go longer than one hour (go to lwvmd.org/current_events for more information). Linda Kohn, LWVMD president, has also been invited to some local League meetings to talk about League structure. While the orientation provides more information than can be shared here, a few key points are important for everyone to know.

The League of Women Voters is a three-tiered organization that operates at the national, state, and local levels. At any level, we all operate under the LWV brand; there is only one "League." There is one state League in each of the 50 states. Some states also have local Leagues (like Maryland), but not all.

When you join the League, you are automatically a member of a local League, of LWV of Maryland, and of LWV of the United States. It is up to you how to participate. Some members focus on their local League only, some prioritize activity at LWVMD, and some are engaged nationally. A few brave people participate at all three levels simultaneously! If you choose to get involved in your local League, you can still engage in LWVMD activities.



For example, some members are active in their local League, but also engage with the State League for studies or as advocates during the General Assembly. The choice is yours and can vary over time.

All levels of the League engage in advocacy/action, in voter education, and in programs and other events. LWV's "golden rule" is that LWVUS focuses on national issues, LWVMD focuses on state issues, and local Leagues focus on local issues. If an issue is before the U.S Congress, LWVUS would lead on it. If an issue is before the Maryland General Assembly, LWVMD would lead on it. If an issue is before local government, the local League would lead on it. It is important that communication and coordination happen when working across the levels. For example, if LWVMD wanted to pursue a national issue, we would need to clear it with LWVUS. The same coordination should happen if a local League wants to pursue a state-wide issue. This process moves along quickly when it needs to happen, and helps ensure we speak with one voice that is consistent with LWV positions.

When you are part of the League, you are part of a big movement, even if you only see part of it. So where do you fit in? Wherever you choose! Find your niche, try something new, and work on what matters most to you. There are no wrong answers!

MISSION AT WORK

Committee Updates: Events

WINTER WORKSHOP ON JANUARY 24, 2026

Planning is underway for the Winter Workshop to be held on Saturday, January 24, 2026, via Zoom, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The agenda is still coming together, but is expected to cover issues related to the 2026 elections and how we can be prepared for the potential for disruptions that may happen.

What sort of disruptions? Our crystal ball is hazy, but we have to recognize the possibility that things can happen. For example, at the federal level, numerous executive orders from the administration have attempted to put constraints on voters, such as requiring documentary proof of citizenship to register or putting limits on access, such as limits to mail-in voting.

The Maryland General Assembly convenes in January, and we will be watching for various bills that may help or hinder voters. While we always watch for actions around voting rights, there are some potential “new” things we want to monitor. For example, we may see activities around redistricting for Congressional representatives that would change district lines (see elsewhere in this newsletter for information on redistricting). This has the potential to cause disruption by confusing voters on where to go to vote and who is on their ballot.

In another example, we may see some consideration of state legislation around 287(g) provisions from the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act that allows ICE to delegate certain immigration functions to state and local law enforcement agencies and oversee the work. LWVMD would be concerned if these results in intimidation at the polls against citizens who have the right to freely cast their ballots.

We may continue to see challenges to Maryland’s voter rolls, and it’s possible that emerging state budget pressures will risk cuts to the State Board of Elections as the demands on them increase.

The list of possible disruptions can be long and disheartening at times. But the League has faced challenges before in its history, and once again, we are called upon to intensify our voter education and outreach—maybe even try some new approaches. More details on the agenda will be forthcoming as it gets filled in with great speakers. For now, mark your calendars and join the conversation!

*“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home.” Edith Sitwell
(British poet)*

MISSION AT WORK

Committee Updates: Office



LWVMD is 99% volunteer driven. Often times if we are taking on a new project it is because we do not have the help to do. The LWVMD Office is looking for help! If you have a few hours and would like to volunteer please see below!

Admin Help: Deposit checks, update database, help with printing. Coming to the office would be required.

Website Updating: help updating pages, checking links, uploading testimony and other new information.

Events: help plan upcoming events, including Council 2026 and Legislative Breakfast

Bits and Bobs: This can include dropping literature during session and returning phone calls.

“On Chanukah when we use one flame to light another, the glow is not halved – the light is multiplied.”

—Micaela Ezra

Committees are also looking for help! LWVMD has several committees that are looking for those interested with a particular passion!

Democracy Dialogues: Looking for people who can share ideas and help look up speakers

Fundraising: Help create new ways of raising money for LWVMD!

Social Media: Help follow the news and what topics we should be posting about. Ideas welcomed!

Voter Services: Help is needed to organize 2026 Candidate Forums.

If you're interested in helping at all please look below for best communications. Training will be made available.



PLEASE CONTACT US TODAY!

Email: Ntyree@lwvmd.org

Call: 443-534-8773

Text: 443-534-8773

DEMOCRACY DIALOGUES

Committee Updates: Democracy Dialogues

Democracy Dialogues is a new initiative of the League of Women Voters of Maryland designed to bring in engaging speakers on issues in the news to help educate voters, even when it's not election time!

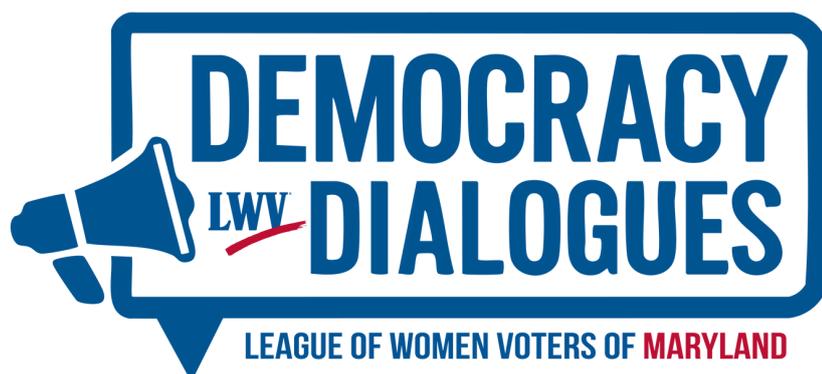
Our first event was held in October 2025, with Baltimore author Elaine Weiss discussing her new book called "Spell Freedom." A moving story about Black citizens exercising their right to vote in the Jim Crow South, it also describes how actions by "ordinary" people made the difference and strengthened democracy.

A YouTube recording is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=_2CHPMOb8nWZ4fUx&v=vhsJKJRXFxc&feature=youtu.be

Our second event, "How Secure is Your Vote?" was held on November 12, 2025. Speakers included election-security experts Pamela Smith, President and CEO of Verified Voting, and Susan Greenhalgh, Senior Advisor on Election Security for Free Speech for People.

The conversation was moderated by Jared DeMarinis, Maryland's State Administrator of Elections. The panel discussed a range of voting issues, including the security of Maryland's voting systems, the benefits and challenges of different voting methods, such as mail-in ballots, and recent federal executive orders on voting.

You can view the full event recording on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eTMdyBH09o>



In February 2026, we are hosting an event on disinformation titled Democracy Under Pressure: Understanding Mis/Disinformation and the Path Forward. We are in the process of confirming speakers, so look for additional information in the months ahead. All of these sessions are free and open to the public.

We have some ideas we're working on for future sessions, but we welcome your ideas. What do you want to hear about? Please feel free to forward your suggestions for future events to gsunderman@lwvmd.org

LWVUS IS AT WORK

LWVUS WORKS DAILY TO PROTECT VOTING ACROSS THE COUNTRY

While LWV members in Maryland focus on local and state issues, we know that members are also very concerned about federal issues. A lot is happening very quickly that affects voters. In contrast to LWVMD, LWVUS has a strong role in litigation, among other things. It is a key part of their work. Since election laws fall under state authority, the lawsuits often involve a state League. LWV and affected state Leagues are (or have been) plaintiffs in cases related to:

- Access to registration: League of Women Voters Education Fund v. Trump challenged Executive Order 14248, which included a requirement for documentary proof of citizenship on the federal voter registration form. A federal court permanently blocked this provision of the order.
- Protecting voters from intimidation: LWVUS (with LWV of New Hampshire) won in court in a 2025 decision against Steve Kramer, Lingo Telecom, LLC, and Life Corporation for voter intimidation, coercion, and deception ahead of the 2024 New Hampshire presidential primary through the use of illegal AI-generated robocalls to discourage voters from participating in the primary.
- Protecting voter privacy: LWV-Calif are defendants against DOJ demands to hand over private voter data, including driver's license and identification card numbers, social security numbers, state-assigned voter identification numbers, language preference, and images of registrants' signatures.

- Defending the Voting Rights Act: LWVUS and allied groups filed an amicus brief in the US Supreme Court supporting a new congressional map that created a second Black-majority district to ensure fair representation for Black voters in Louisiana. The Supreme Court has heard the case but not issued a decision.

Most recently, because of alerts from LWVUS, LWVMD was able to take action on federal actions that can threaten voter access. We signed onto an LWVUS letter going to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to reject a proposed expansion of an online system used to provide immigration status and U.S. citizenship by pooling data across agencies in an effort to create a national citizenship database. Many Leagues and individual members were alerted to a petition submitted to the Election Assistance Commission to engage in rule-making to add a requirement for documentary proof of citizenship on the federal registration form. That should sound familiar, but this time, it is being attempted through a different angle. Alerts and opportunities for action come from LWVUS efforts. Be sure to check the LWVUS website regularly to see how they are speaking out on your behalf. There is also a space to sign up for the LWVUS newsletter.

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SHOP OUR COLLECTION

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