

January 2026

# STATE BOARD LETTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND



## SCHOOL'S BACK IN SESSION!

And so is LWVMD. This month, and all winter, you can expect to see LWVMD showing up for you in Annapolis during the 2026 legislative session as well hitting the pavement

This year will host the 2026 mid-term elections. Historically, Marylanders have not turned out for the primary (held in June this year) in great numbers. Every thing LWVMD does between now and then will be to change that. Join us in our efforts today!

*"Voting is the first duty of democracy."*

- Lyndon Johnson, 36th president of the United States

## UPCOMING LEAGUE EVENTS

<b>JANUARY 24</b>	Winter Workshop
<b>FEBRUARY 5</b>	Speaker Series: Misinformation
<b>FEBRUARY 9</b>	Legislative Day
<b>FEBRUARY 23</b>	Lobby Night

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# MAKE A RESOLUTION FOR 2026: GET MORE PEOPLE TO VOTE IN THE PRIMARY

Linda Kohn, LWVMD President

It's now officially 2026, an election year. As I talk with members, I hear a lot of worries. Will people turn out, or have voters lost their faith in the purpose of voting? Will voters seek out information from the League and other trusted organizations or succumb to false information and rumors produced by artificial intelligence (AI)? Will people be afraid to go to a polling place if they perceive threats and intimidation? The answers to those questions are up to you. Start thinking now about what you can do to help ensure that voters participate in 2026. I do not mean November—I mean the primary in June. Here are some options to get you started.

**1)** Contact your local League and ask how you can help. It might include talking to voters at community events. A couple of hours is all that is involved. Or maybe you know about an event where the League should be present. Let somebody know!

**2)** Practice ahead of time on what you want to say to voters. While you might ask if someone is registered, do not let the conversation end there. I often asked if someone was 'ready to vote.' Often, they paused and asked, "What do you mean?" Once I got them to stop, I had an opportunity to ask if they knew where to go to vote, or if they knew about the candidates running (Vote411), or if they knew about voting by mail, since everybody is busy. Think about what you want to say ahead of time and practice it.

**3)** Even apart from the League, talk to people you know about voting. If you're in other groups, talk to the leadership and ask them to convey (nonpartisan) voting information and encourage people to vote. If more organizations talk about voting to their members or constituents, we all help spread the word. Ours is an important voice, but not the only one.

**4)** Continue communicating after Election Day. Let voters know that counting ballots is done by bipartisan teams, and it takes time to do it right. Maryland has never missed its deadlines.

*“Will people be afraid to go to a polling place if they perceive threats and intimidation?”*

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**Get Involved with The League!**



## 2026 WINTER WORKSHOP

**JANUARY 24<sup>TH</sup>**

**VIRTUAL - 9:00 AM**

## WINTER WORKSHOP

*Saturday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 AM*

THE RISK OF VOTER INTIMIDATION AT THE POLLS

Join LWVMD and leading experts to discuss the onslaught of threats to voters and what we can do to combat feelings of intimidation.

Register Here:

<https://www.lwvmd.org/winterworkshop2026>

## DEMOCRACY DIALOGUES

*February 5<sup>th</sup> 7:00 PM*

This virtual discussion will explore how misinformation and disinformation distort public understanding, erode trust in democratic institutions, and place increasing strain on our democracy—particularly here in Maryland. Panelists will examine how false narratives take hold, who they target, and what citizens, media, and civic organizations can do to build voter resilience and confidence ahead of future elections.

Register Here: [https://www.lwvmd.org/advocacy\\_training\\_1](https://www.lwvmd.org/advocacy_training_1)

## MISINFORMATION & DEMOCRACY

HOW FALSE NARRATIVES SPREAD + HOW TO RESPOND



February 5<sup>th</sup>  
7:00-8:00 PM  
Virtual

MODERATOR



**Len Foxwell**  
Founder & Principal, Tred Avon Strategies

SPEAKER



**Angelette Aviles**  
Host, WBAL Radio

SPEAKER



**Timothy Richardson**  
Program Director, PEN America

LWV OF MARYLAND

## Legislative Day 2026

**FEBRUARY 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2026**

**VIRTUAL - 9:30 AM**

Hear from Maryland Legislators and learn more about LWVMD's advocacy impact!

**REGISTER NOW:** [LWVMD.org/LegislativeDay2026](https://www.lwvmd.org/LegislativeDay2026)



## LEGISLATIVE DAY

*February 9<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM*

Legislative Day is LWVMD's annual event to learn about legislation directly from your Senators or Delegates as well as LWVMD advocates.

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

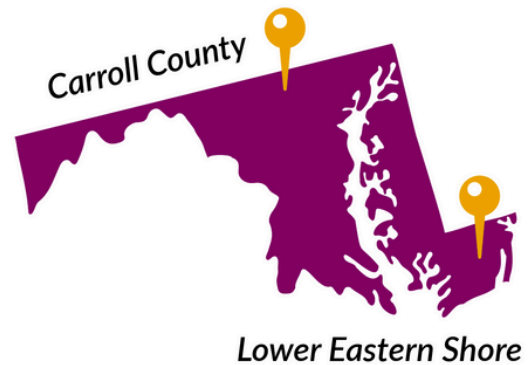
# OUR IMPACT LWVMD IN 2025



## 2025 SNAPSHOT

2025 put our democracy to the test. Throughout the year, LWVMD stepped up through advocacy, voter education, and grassroots action. Here's what we accomplished together.

## 2 NEW LOCAL LEAGUES



### Membership & Grassroots Power



**1,986**

Members Statewide



**+590**

New Members Activated



**42%**

Membership Growth

### Education & Engagement

**1,107** People engaged at LWVMD events

**60+** Hours of nonpartisan voter education

### Advocacy & Policy

**110+** Bills testified on in Annapolis

**15+** Coalitions LWVMD actively engaged in

This couldn't be done without you. Please support our work here:  
[www.lwvmd.org/fast\\_donate](http://www.lwvmd.org/fast_donate)

# MISSION AT WORK

## Committee Updates: Action

### LAST ADVOCATE TRAINING PLANNED BEFORE GENERAL ASSEMBLY STARTS

The third advocacy training will be held on Friday, January 9, 2026, at 3:30 p.m., via Zoom. This will be the last training session before the General Assembly starts on January 14. In this training, we will get into the nitty-gritty of the policies and protocols to be an LWVMD Advocate. We will also give an update on the many changes that are in the works for leadership of the House and House Committees (there have been many), and also the Senate.

In the first training, we covered how a bill moves through the Maryland legislature, and in the second, we covered what it means to be an advocate for LWVMD. Recordings of these sessions and the manual are available on the LWVMD website here:  
[https://www.lwvmd.org/advocate\\_manual](https://www.lwvmd.org/advocate_manual)

It's not too late to join the effort. Work with a team on a topic of greatest interest to you. LWVMD has a very high reputation among legislators for our focused, professional, and nonpartisan input on legislation.


For more information please contact Nancy Soreng at [nsoreng@lwvmd.org](mailto:nsoreng@lwvmd.org)

## ADVOCACY TRAINING

### SESSION 3

#### Advocacy in Action: Becoming an LWVMD Advocate

 Friday, January 9<sup>th</sup>

 3:30 - 5:00 pm

Register at [bit.ly/482mcmo](https://bit.ly/482mcmo)



## GET INVOLVED

**Info:** Email [nsoreng@lwvmd.org](mailto:nsoreng@lwvmd.org)

**Info:** Visit [www.lwvmd.org/action](http://www.lwvmd.org/action)

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

# MISSION AT WORK

## Committee Updates: Action

### LWVMD LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2026

The 2026 session of the Maryland General Assembly starts on January 14, 2026. Each year before the legislative session starts, LWVMD sets its priorities for that year's advocacy. As always, any priority must have a position supporting it. When thinking about what to prioritize, we also consider whether:

- We are leaders on the bill,
- We are working on the steering committee in a coalition,
- legislators expect us to show up for these bills, and it would be "strange" if we did not,
- The issue is one we have historically been on the front lines of.

Our priorities are not the only bills we work on, and we will continue to advocate in other areas. The LWVMD Board adopted these priorities at its December 2025 meeting.

### LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2026

#### **Making Democracy Work**

- Special Elections (General Assembly – Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office)
- Maryland Voting Rights Act
- Voting Rights for Incarcerated Individuals (Voting Rights for All Act)

#### **Social and Economic Justice**

- Health – End-of-Life Option Act, Prescription Drug Affordability
- Education – Disciple Data Accessibility and Transparency, Support for the Blueprint

#### **Protecting the Environment**

- Transportation and Climate Alignment Act

### **Additional Policy Areas Where the League Will Advocate**

Beyond the priority legislation above, LWVMD will actively advocate on the following policy areas in 2026:

**Meeting Basic Human Needs** – Affordable Housing Policy, Food Security, Policies Supporting Children and Families

**Administration of Justice** – Immigration Rights, Investigatory power for Police Accountability Boards

See elsewhere in this newsletter for information on how to become an advocate for LWVMD.

# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



## OUR 2026 PRIORITIES



### MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK



### SOCIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE



### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

## MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

### Special Elections

Requiring special elections to fill General Assembly vacancies, ensuring that legislators are elected by voters – not party insiders.

### Maryland Voting Rights Act

Protecting voters from racial vote dilution by strengthening tools for communities to challenge unfair maps and voter suppression.

### Voting Rights for All Act

Restoring voting rights for incarcerated Marylanders serving felony sentences.

## SOCIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

### End-of-Life Option Act

Allowing terminally ill Marylanders to choose medical aid in dying through a carefully regulated process.

### Prescription Drug Affordability

Lowering drug costs by strengthening the authority of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board.

### School Discipline Data Transparency

Improving transparency in school discipline data to identify disparities and promote fair practices.

### Protecting the Blueprint

Protecting critical education funding for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

### Transportation & Climate Alignment Act

Expanding clean, safe, and affordable transportation options to reduce climate pollution, lower household costs, and improve access to jobs, education, and healthcare across Maryland.

## Additional Policy Areas the League Will Advocate On

Beyond the priority legislation above, LWVMD will actively advocate on the following policy areas:

### Meeting Basic Human Needs

Affordable Housing, Food Security, Policies Supporting Children and Families

### Administration of Justice

Immigration Rights, Investigatory power for Police Accountability Boards

# VOTER INTIMIDATION

## Winter Workshop

### CALM OR CHAOS: RESPONDING TO VOTER INTIMIDATION

LWVMD's annual Winter Workshop will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., via Zoom. We will focus on the 2026 elections, specifically the potential for threats against voters. There has been a clear escalation of threats that voters may face when they vote in 2026. Border Patrol and ICE agents have been seen throughout Maryland, separate from any federal troops deployed to some cities.

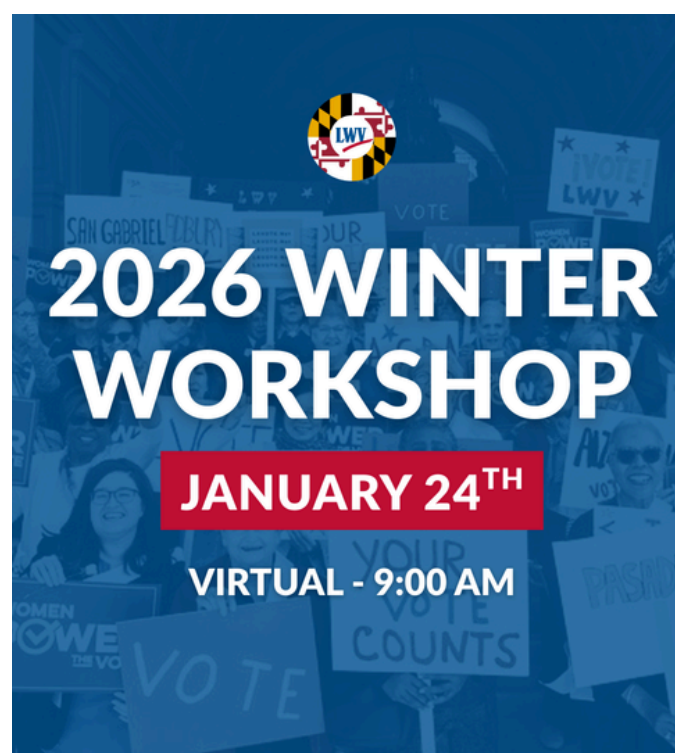
Although agents are not permitted on public school grounds, they have been observed nearby, which has made young students afraid to attend school. **What happens if agents are outside polling places on election day? What if they're not agents, but individuals who appear to threaten voters? What if agents hang around while you are talking to voters at a League event before election day? What if the Department of Justice succeeds in getting Maryland's voter rolls? Will voters be purged from the rolls and have to re-register? What's legal? How do you respond? How is LWV fighting back?**

These are the issues we will explore on January 24. We have invited some excellent speakers to participate and are awaiting confirmations. The agenda will include panel discussions, small-group conversations, and ample time for you to ask questions.

Elections in 2026 may be orderly—we all hope for that. However, a few events in Maryland in 2024 were handled by the League through Election Protection. And the environment is even more charged today. We need to be prepared!

Register here:

[www.lwvmd.org/winterworkshop2026](http://www.lwvmd.org/winterworkshop2026)



# MISSION AT WORK

## Committee Updates: Democracy Dialogues

### DEMOCRACY DIALOGUES—TWO NEW EVENTS

Democracy Dialogues has some exciting and informative events planned for 2026. So, mark your calendars.

#### **February 5, 2026 @ 7:00 pm: Democracy Under Pressure: Understanding Misinformation & Disinformation.**

This event will explore how misinformation and disinformation distort public understanding, erode trust in democratic institutions, and place increasing strain on our democracy—particularly here in Maryland. Panelists will examine how false narratives take hold, who they target, and how citizens, the media, and civic organizations can build voter resilience and confidence ahead of future elections.

Len Foxwell, Founder & Principal of Tred Avon Strategies, a communications and political consulting firm, will moderate the discussion. Panelists include WBAL Radio host and journalist Angelette Aviles and Timothy Richardson, Program Director for PEN America. Together, they bring a wealth of experience—both national and local—on the impact of disinformation and how to combat it.

Register Here:

[www.lwvmd.org/misinformation\\_democracy](http://www.lwvmd.org/misinformation_democracy)

#### **March 3, 2026 @ 7:00 pm: Anti-Science: The Movement to Discredit Science and Undermine our Public Health System.**

With a focus on public health, this event will examine the movement to misrepresent and/or reject scientific findings and how to fight back.

Peter Hotez, MD, PhD at Baylor College of Medicine is a distinguished research scientist, biochemist, and pediatrician who has led or co-led the development of numerous vaccines, including several coronavirus vaccines. He has been the target of numerous campaigns to discredit him and his work.

Edward L. Hunter, MA, is the former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Washington Office, where, for over a decade, he directed CDC's legislative strategy and served as a principal CDC representative to Congress, the Administration, and public health organizations.

# MISSION AT WORK

Committee Updates: Democracy Dialogues

# MISINFORMATION & DEMOCRACY

HOW FALSE NARRATIVES SPREAD  
+ HOW TO RESPOND



February 5<sup>th</sup>



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SPEAKER



**Timothy Richardson**

Program Director, PEN  
America

REGISTER NOW AT [LWVMD.ORG/MISINFORMATION\\_DEMOCRACY](https://LWVMD.ORG/MISINFORMATION_DEMOCRACY)

# MISSION AT WORK

## Committee Updates: Study

### LWVMD EDUCATION POSITION REVISED AFTER CONSENSUS

At the LWVMD convention in 2023, members adopted a study to examine the meaning of “local control of education” within the existing position on education financing. The impetus for the study was the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (Blueprint), passed by the General Assembly to transform public education across Maryland.

A study group volunteered to examine this issue and met for approximately two years. Members were Gail Sunderman, Chair (Baltimore City), Jana Barberio (Calvert County), Katie Delezenski (Wicomico County), Nancy Diamond (Baltimore City), Marlene Durholz (Howard County), Judith Morenoff (Montgomery County), and Kathy Ruckman (Kent County). They produced a fact sheet that was presented at the 2025 LWVMD Convention and included a proposed change to an existing LWVMD position. During the fall months, local Leagues were asked to review the fact sheet and the proposed change and determine if there was consensus within their local League for the change.

Responses were submitted to a state-wide consensus committee that included Marian Herb, Coordinator (Kent); Kay Flowe (Harford); Marcia Kingman (Montgomery), Gail Sunderman (Baltimore City), study chair & LWVMD Board member; and Linda Kohn, LWVMD Board member. After reviewing the responses and comments, they determined consensus across the state in favor of the proposed change to the position. The LWVMD Board received a report from the state-wide consensus committee in December and moved to accept the revised position. It can now be used going forward and will be ratified by the full membership at the next convention in 2027.

The position under Financing Education now reads as follows:

“Financing Education: The primary responsibility for funding public elementary and secondary education lies with the state. Support for:

1. A foundation program based on a weighted per pupil formula supported from general state revenues at a level high enough to eliminate inequities.
2. Some local leeway for city/county councils to provide additional funding for education.
3. The encouragement of increased federal funding for education.”

Thanks go to the members of the study committee for their extensive work on the topic and to members of the state-wide consensus committee for their timely review.

# LWVUS CONVENTION 2026

By Linda Kohn

## LWVUS 2026 CONVENTION TO BE HELD JUNE 25-28 IN COLUMBUS, OHIO

LWVUS has announced that its next biennial convention will take place on June 25-28 in Columbus, Ohio. Registration opens in January. At a convention, members vote to elect officers and directors, adopt programs, make bylaw changes, adopt a budget, and address any additional items that may arise. Every local League can send at least one delegate to the convention, plus one additional delegate for every 50 members. Typically, there is also an option to attend virtually, and members attending virtually have all the voting and voice rights of members who attend in person.

A key part of every convention is to review LWVUS positions. All League action, advocacy, and education is based on the League's positions and principles. Any changes or additions can only be made at a national convention. Every League across the country has the opportunity to provide input. Many Leagues have local meetings during January and February to review the positions and determine what should be affirmed or if any changes should be considered. Leagues provide their input through an online survey (only) that is open until March 10, 2026. Comments are not accepted from individual members, so participate through your local League. The current LWVUS positions can be viewed in their publication, "Impact on Issues," available on the LWVUS website (<https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>). This document is almost 200 pages, so use caution before printing it!

More information about program planning can be found here: <https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/PP%20Leaders%20Guide%2026-28%20FINAL.pdf>



# 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](https://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
- **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.

# 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](http://www.LWVMD.Printify.me)



## NEW IN THE STORE



**LWV VOTER  
CREWNECK**



**SUFFRAGETTES  
HOODIE**



**SUFFRAGETTES  
COFFEE MUG**

## 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](http://LWVMD.Printify.me)