



December 2023

Happy Holidays

The LWVHC would like to wish you a happy and successful New Year and to express our gratitude for everything you have done to support us in 2023.

Together, we have managed to grow our connections with the community, present thoughtful and informative Hot Topics discussions, host state and local representatives to discuss important legislative issues, and so much more. Both our members and non-members helped us make our Midsummer Night Gala one of the most successful fundraisers we've ever hosted, and the generous donations members have made throughout the year will support our efforts as we prepare for the 2024 election cycle.

Every measure our League takes empowers and educates citizens who will ensure that we never lose our greatest power and privilege — the right to vote in free and fair elections. We share your concerns about the state of voters rights and will continue to strive to preserve these freedoms.

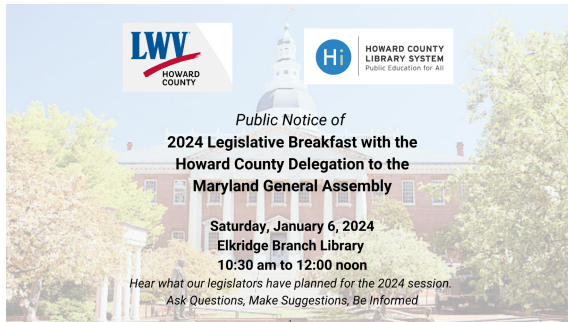
Your participation as a volunteer for voter education events, election forums, community outreach, and preparing our Voters Guide and Vote 411 will help us enormously. We sincerely hope you consider joining us as a volunteer or board member for the upcoming 2024 election season and beyond.

As always, we thank you for your commitment to our mission, and hope to see you at our events, both virtual and in person, next year.

Have a joyful holiday,

The LWVHC Board

Legislative Breakfast - Jan. 6



We hope to see you there!

We are proud to co-sponsor this year's Legislative Breakfast with the Howard County LIBRARY SYSTEM as part of our joint civic education partnership.

At this event, we will serve light refreshments. We will hear from the Howard County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly.

Looking for a Secretary

If you are interested in filling the role of Secretary for the Board, please reach out to us by emailing the [Board](#).

We meet monthly for approximately 1 hour. Prior to the meeting you will assemble the Director's Reports into a single document (by cutting and pasting what is emailed to you). At the meeting you will take notes. After the meeting you will send out those notes as minutes.

ERA 100 Year March



Laura Mettle and Maureen Stang joined the ERA 100 Years March on Wednesday, December 13th. Although the Amendment was finally ratified by 38 State legislatures, it still has not been published as part of the US Constitution. Former Rep. Carolyn Maloney of NY, and current Rep. Cori Bush of Missouri, spoke to attendees about their efforts to have the current US Congress and US Senate pass a bill to accept the ratification, which some 80% of the population supports. Should the bill come for votes, it is anticipated that it would pass both chambers.

The ERA was first introduced in Congress 100 years ago. Last year the Amendment met the Constitutional Requirements of 1) Being approved by 2/3 of the members of Both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, and 2) being ratified by 3/4 of the State Legislatures (currently 38). There is no time limit for ratification specified in the Constitution. In 2020 Virginia became the 38th state to ratify the Amendment, while the Justice Department ruled the ratification was null and void since it occurred after 1982.

The LWVUS is part of the ERA Coalition sponsoring the march, which includes the American Association of University Women, EqualityNOW, Feminist Majority, National Council of Negro Women, National Organization of Women, and the Young Women's Christian Association.

A Conversation with Dr. Martirano - HCPSS superintendent

Hosted by the Association of Community Services on November 15, 2023

Dr. Martirano informed us that the HCPSS currently enrolls about 57,000 students. Total student enrollment has been flat for several years, and is NOT growing. What has been growing is the percentage of students who are eligible to receive Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), an indicator of child poverty. Over the past decade, the percentage of students receiving FARMS has grown from 22% to 30%, which is probably an underestimate, as families self-report. At present, about 800 students are homeless on any given day, a number which is also an increase over recent years. The Howard County Public Schools are a destination for families with children who have special educational needs: there are currently about 8,000 students (about 14%) who receive Special Education Services. The racial demographics of the student body has grown more diverse over the past decades; today the student population is approximately 1/3 white, 1/3 African American, and 1/3 Asian/Latino/other. The system has a significant number of vacant teacher positions in secondary mathematics and special education, primarily because of the shortage of young people entering the education profession.

Dr. Martirano alerted us to proposed legislation to provide breakfast and lunch (and in some cases a supper) in all schools for all students free of charge, as has been the case during the pandemic and at some schools experiencing high rates of poverty, and he asked us to support this legislation. Hungry students depend on the food provided at school, and hungry children can't focus on learning.

Recent high school graduation rates have risen to 95%, and proficient reading scores among third graders have also increased. Effective reading instruction remains a priority focus, as failure to master reading leads to higher incidence of dropping-out of school, which is linked to incarceration. Dr. Martirano is focused on discipline practices that keep students in school, as suspension greatly increases the chance of a student dropping out of school.

The implications of the Blueprint for Education was also discussed. Historically, the HCPSS has implemented support programs to enhance curriculum, raise student achievement and increase staff salaries. Those programs are foundational to that which has set the HCPSS apart from other systems in Maryland. The Blueprint implementation reorders educational priorities as a matter of law throughout the state, moving some of those programs off the list of priorities. In addition school funding is set based on enrollment, and flat enrollment translates into flat school funding, leaving no room in the budget for any new initiatives. Dr. Martirano warned that implementing the Blueprint will cause some support programs to be dismantled in order to find the money for Blueprint initiatives. Losing our comparative salary advantage will also make it more difficult to recruit new teachers.

Save the Date - January 18, 2024

The LWV Of United States' Biennial Convention will be held in Washington DC in June 2024. Local Leagues have all been asked to review the League Program and Positions and recommend our priorities for the next two years by March 10th, 2024.

We will hold a ZOOM meeting on Thursday, January 18, 2024 at 7:00 pm.

More information will be sent in 2024.



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