

# THE VOTER

*A Quarterly Newsletter of the LWVAAC*

June 2023, Issue 129

## Calendar of Events

### LWVAAC Board Meeting & Annual Retreat

Tue, June 13, 12:00-3:00 p.m. [RSVP](#)  
Lake Waterford Park, Pasadena

### Juneteenth Annapolis Festival 2023\*

Sat, June 17, 1:00-9:00 p.m.  
Bates Athletic Complex, 935 Spa Rd, Annapolis

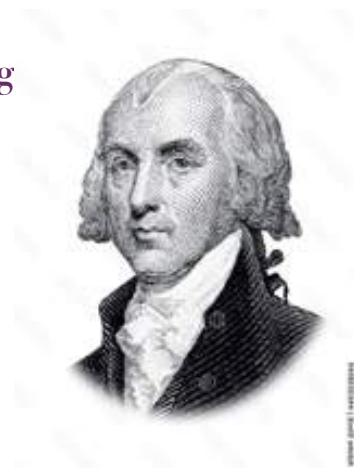
### LWVAAC Community Case Study Discussion

*Madison's Federal Negative and the Making of the Constitution*  
Thu, June 22, 6:30-8:00 p.m. via Zoom [RSVP](#)

### USCIS Naturalization Ceremony\*

Tue, July 4, 9 a.m.  
William Paca House and Gardens  
186 Prince George St., Annapolis

If you were drafting  
the Constitution,  
how much power  
would you grant  
the federal  
government over  
the states?



See page 6 or

[lwvaacmd.org/23case\\_madison](http://lwvaacmd.org/23case_madison)

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## LWVAAC Online

Alfa Stevens, President, [pres@lwvaacmd.org](mailto:pres@lwvaacmd.org)  
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Facebook: @lwvaac Phone: 443-672-8270  
Join/Renew: [www.lwvaacmd.org/join2](http://www.lwvaacmd.org/join2)  
Donate: [lwvaacmd.org/efdonation](http://lwvaacmd.org/efdonation)  
Voter Toolkit: [lwvaacmd.org/voter\\_toolkit](http://lwvaacmd.org/voter_toolkit)

**\*Voter Service Volunteers Needed!**

Email [votersvc@lwvaacmd.org](mailto:votersvc@lwvaacmd.org) for details.

## President's Page



Vice President Alexis Dorsey

Dear Members,

At the April Annual Membership Meeting, members adopted a change to our bylaws to have newly elected officers and directors begin their terms on July 1 rather than immediately after the meeting. This allows me another chance to share my thoughts with you as acting President.

Amanda SubbaRao, our incoming President, and I have met a few times to review the past year and discuss plans for the future. We agree that providing more opportunities for member participation is paramount and that a better understanding of the community concerns is a priority. In this non-election year, we envision engaging members and empowering voters through educational events and advocacy. Amanda and I look

forward to working together on these initiatives and to hearing your ideas.

I hope you will join us for the final events of our 2022-23 program year: the annual retreat and picnic on June 13 (see p. 3) and the interactive discussion of the Harvard case study, *Madison's Federal Negative and the Making of the Constitution*, on June 22 (see p. 6).

Best wishes for a safe and enjoyable summer!

~ Alexis

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### *Greetings!*

I am honored to serve as the new LWVAAC President. I'm especially grateful to have an experienced Board to help guide the way and to have many hardworking members.

When I first joined the League in 2021, I volunteered to help update the LWVAAC website. Since that time, we have worked to make it a place where people can learn not only about LWVAAC activities but about our government too. If you have ideas about using it or other tools to improve member and public engagement, please email me at [pres@lwvaacmd.org](mailto:pres@lwvaacmd.org). I would enjoy hearing from you.

Several years ago, I relocated from Chicago to Annapolis with my husband and our boys. Although I had spent most of my adult life in Chicago, I grew up in Montgomery County. My first memories of the League center around my mother, who was a member. Every year when the



President Amanda SubbaRao

## Greetings [continued from p. 2]

League calendar came, we'd hang it up in the kitchen together, and she'd talk about all the good work the League was doing. And then she would fill in the calendar squares with the first family events of the year. That League calendar was the hub of our family life.

Voting was extremely important to my mom, which isn't surprising, as her mother was a suffragist. When we were little, mom would often take my brother and me into the voting booth with her. "Every election matters," she would tell us.

As a professor, mom instilled in me a strong sense that education was important. I worked in educational publishing for almost 20 years on K-12 science textbooks. So I really love that the League has a mission to educate voters about candidates and issues, as well as advocacy.

Many of us joined LWVAAC because we care about voter rights and voter education. We constantly hear about issues that touch and affect us, that move us to want to do something. I look forward to working together with you as we face the future, support voters, and improve Anne Arundel County.



*Amanda accepts the gavel from outgoing president Alfa Stevens at LWVAAC 2023 Annual Meeting. (Photo by K. Larrabee)*

~ Amanda

## Member News

### Retreat with Us...

### Help Shape your League's Priorities

By Kathy Larrabee, Director and Membership Chair

For many individuals, the transition from spring to summer brings new norms, longer and warmer days, family vacations, and more. This change of season also is a transition period for many volunteer organizations as they enter a new fiscal year. LWVAAC and approximately 800 other local Leagues across the country stand poised at the start of summer for the sprint into our new program year.

While all League calendars include a number of established annual obligations, we also have the opportunity to offer programs outside the curriculum that can create an outstanding year. To develop purposeful and fun activities, LWVAAC needs input from its members.

Think ahead about activities, programs, and projects that would promote the goal of making democracy work. Think about topics for educational opportunities for League members and the public. Think about social opportunities that could bring together members to foster friendly, working relationships. Think outside the box; all ideas are good when brainstorming is the agenda. Let's talk.

Click [here](#) to RSVP and choose your box lunch. #

Join us on Tuesday,  
June 13, 12 noon,  
Lake Waterford Park,  
Pasadena, for a  
Panera-style picnic  
and planning session

## Faces of Our League

### Vicki Meade & Pat O'Connell

**Q: What prompted you to join the League?**

We attended the League's Earth Day presentation featuring Gerald Winegrad at the Annapolis library and were very impressed. I just retired from my job, after a long career as a writer/editor, and I am looking for more ways to be involved in the community. My husband, Pat, joined to support the League, as well. We are a "mixed marriage" with different political leanings, and we look for opportunities to understand various points of view.



*Pat and Vicki on vacation in Portugal.*

**Q: What civics issues do you care most about?**

I particularly care about reducing gun violence, addressing climate change and plastic pollution, supporting reproductive freedom, repairing our immigration system, and providing affordable healthcare and childcare. Pat is a strong supporter of the military and fiscal responsibility in government.

**Q: What were your primary careers?**

Before retirement, Pat was a Captain in the U.S. Air Force and then an analyst with the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing. I was a writer/editor and communications project manager for associations in Washington, DC, and later for technology businesses such as Oracle. I also freelanced for 12 years for regional and national publications, and I taught writing as an adjunct instructor at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. #



**Annapolis**  
Vicki Meade  
Pat O'Connell

**Arnold**  
Jeanne Halpin





## “Forever” Secretary Honored

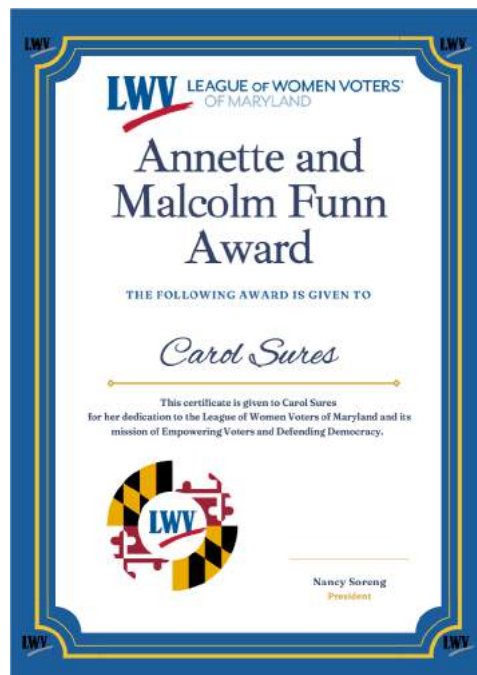
By Kathy Larrabee, Director and Membership Chair

LWVAAC life member Carol Sures was among fourteen local League members recognized by LWVMD at its Convention Gala, held recently in Frederick, MD. Award recipients were chosen as a tribute to the legacy of Annette and Malcolm Funn, whose exemplary civic contributions to numerous organizations, including LWV, helped engage communities and strengthen democracy.

For more than 50 years, Carol Sures made the League her top-priority volunteer organization, beginning in NC and then in MD with the Montgomery County League and, since the mid 1980s, with LWVAAC. She served several terms on the LWVMD Board for a total of 12 years, applying her journalistic knowledge and skills in numerous ways. She was editor of the newsletter, making significant improvements, and later helped create the State Board Letter, still a primary accounting of state Board business. She wrote and published the LWVMD manual on government: *Maryland Government: How It Works and How to Work It*. She chaired a consensus on domestic violence, and was deeply involved in the League’s efforts to pass ballot Question 6, which codified reproductive choice in MD.

While serving on the state Board, Carol also served on the LWVAAC Board in several capacities. She held the Secretary position for more than 20 years, earning her the affectionate title of Forever Secretary. As a meticulous note taker and accurate writer, coupled with knowledge of protocol and League history, there was no Board incentive to allow Carol a break. In addition to her Board position, Carol found time to chair several studies, including one on transportation and another on the local jury system. She also helped to register and educate voters by organizing various events.

Congratulations, Carol, on this well-deserved honor. #



### Reflections on learning of the award...

*“The highlight of these many years is the deep, abiding friendships I’ve made through the League. Sadly, some have departed this life, but each one has enriched mine beyond measure. The League gave me the opportunity to stretch and grow and to enjoy the companionship of so many brilliant minds.”*

*~ Carol Sures*

## Community Outreach

### Reliving History through Case Study and Discourse

By Joyce Martin, Secretary and Harvard Case  
Method Project Coordinator

Join us. We promise a lively, interactive discussion of *Madison's Federal Negative and the Making of the Constitution* on Thursday, June 22, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. This participatory community event, hosted by LWVAAC, will be moderated by Anne Arundel County Public School teachers Christina Sipe (Broadneck High School) and Seth Wolak (South River High School).

The classroom-like exercise is modeled by the renowned Harvard Case Method approach to civics education. Ms. Sipe and Mr. Wolak were nominated by LWVAAC to be trained in this nationally successful approach to civil discourse, collaboration, and decision making.

The program allows you to experience a teaching method that Ms. Sipe and Mr. Wolak engaged in this past school year with advanced placement students in government, civics, or social studies classes. Specifically, you will examine and respond to a particular moment in American history, during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, putting yourselves in that time and situation.

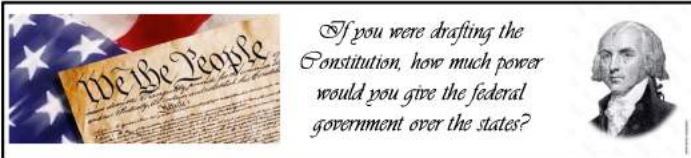
Thanks to support from LWVUS, local Leagues nationwide have hosted this teaching method in

800 schools with 1,000 teachers in 48 states and the District of Columbia this past year.

LWVAAC encourages you to take advantage of this opportunity to discover how students are learning, using the behind-the-scenes choices that Madison might have considered.

Please go to [lwvaacmd.org/23case\\_madison](https://lwvaacmd.org/23case_madison) to reserve your spot. After registering, you will receive a Zoom link for the meeting and access to the case study materials. For more information, contact [secretary@lwvaacmd.org](mailto:secretary@lwvaacmd.org). #

**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY



*If you were drafting the  
Constitution, how much power  
would you give the federal  
government over the states?*

**JOIN IN A LIVELY CLASSROOM DISCUSSION OF**

*Madison's Federal Negative and the  
Making of the Constitution*

**LED BY AACPS HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2023**  
**6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom**

Demonstrating the Harvard Case Study Method, Anne Arundel County Public School teachers Christina Sipe (Broadneck High School) and Seth Wolak (South River High School) will engage participants in a pivotal debate at the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

The Case Method requires individuals to walk in the shoes of decision-makers by considering all facts within the contexts of time. We invite you to come prepared to discuss the provided case materials, think critically, and learn more about our American Democracy.

**RESERVE YOUR SPOT NOW**  
Click **RESERVE** or go to [lwvaacmd.org/23Case\\_Madison](https://lwvaacmd.org/23Case_Madison).

After registering, you will receive a zoom link for the meeting and access to the case study materials. For more information, email [secretary@lwvaacmd.org](mailto:secretary@lwvaacmd.org).

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, PLEASE SHARE!**

## Earth Day with Winegrad: Challenges to Bay Restoration

By Kathy Larrabee, Director and Newsletter Editor

In a nod to Earth Day in April, LWVAAC hosted Chesapeake Bay advocate Gerald Winegrad at the Busch Annapolis Library to present, in his words, the good, the bad, and the ugly of Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts over a period of some 30 years. Winegrad is a life-long Marylander, environmental attorney, former state senator, and member of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. The event drew League members and area residents concerned with long-term declines in the Bay's water quality and wildlife species. Winegrad, widely known for his unvarnished guest columns on environmental topics in local newspapers, began the program by mapping the Chesapeake Bay watershed—some 64,000 square miles, encompassing more than 100 rivers and streams that eventually drain into the bay.



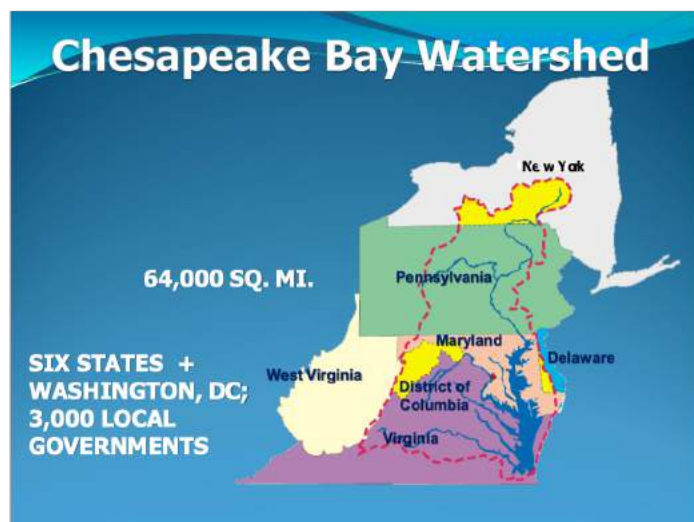
*Gerald Winegrad at LWVAAC Earth Day Commemoration, on April 23. (Photo by K. Larrabee)*

### The Good

Winegrad contrasted today's Bay-living lifestyles with traditions and activities years back. He touched the hearts of the audience with photos of his family sharing a crab feast on the deck of his waterfront home at a time when hardshell crabs were plentiful. He shared photos of healthy fish, wading birds, and waterfowl, graciously praising his wife's photography skills. He acknowledged those whose livelihood depends on the Bay's health. And finally, there were photos of sunsets over river piers and pilings. In all, he showed his audience what the land of pleasant living can look like when we care for natural resources.

### The Bad

Today, approximately 70 percent of Bay waters are polluted, despite nearly 3 decades of repeated restoration pledges by the EPA and watershed states. Winegrad attributes this dire situation to weak oversight and leadership of the





[continued from p. 7]

EPA, which has regulatory authority over the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). EPA has permitted the states to miss deadlines for meeting agreed upon pollution reduction goals established in compliance with the CWA. Moreover, the CWA has been amended numerous times to address specific state issues, weakening its effectiveness. Winegrad unapologetically gives “Pinocchio noses” to past Maryland Governors who have touted successes in cleaning up the Bay.

### The Ugly

With only minimal progress to reduce polluting nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus, Winegrad blames reckless agricultural practices. As an example of agriculture’s impact, he presented this scenario: a single chicken farm with 150,000 birds produces 2 million pounds of manure a year, equivalent to human waste from a city of 25,000 people. He said, unfortunately, whether needed as fertilizer or not, most of the manure is applied to farmland. “Without stricter regulation of farm pollutants, caused primarily by poultry, the Bay cannot regain its health,” he said.

Addressing diminished Bay habitat, Winegrad explained that sedimentation flows occur naturally in estuary systems, but sediment has been heavily contaminated with nitrogen and phosphorus. Sediment smothers the Bay’s bottom-living creatures and blocks sunlight needed by Bay grasses, destroying about 80 percent of the Bay’s oyster habitat.

Popular fish, such as striped bass and shad, suffer reproductive issues without grasses for spawning. Again, Winegrad named agriculture as the primary culprit to Bay pollution. #

Click [here](#) to view the Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s State of the Bay 2022 report.



*The Busch Annapolis Library proved an ideal venue for our Earth Day program, with state of the art A/V equipment, a spacious meeting room, and helpful staff. (Photo by K. Larrabee)*

Like a practiced SWAT team, LWVAAC members cued up to ensure a flawless, public Earth Day event, each with a specialty that contributed to overall success.

Special thanks to: Marg Duffy (EPA retiree)—Earth Day concept and program plan; Kathy Larrabee—publicity, community engagement, and photography; Amanda SubbaRao—audio-visual; Alexis Dorsey—moderator; Vera Herath—voter information/greeter; Jeri Schoenfeld—greeter and whatever needed; Niecy Chambers—homemade cookies in eco-friendly wrap; audience and members—muscle to stack chairs and restore the Busch Annapolis Library room to perfect condition.



## Action and Advocacy

### Council approves public campaign financing

By Abby Root, Director and Action Co-chair

On May 15, 2023, I testified before the County Council on Bill 25-23, An Ordinance concerning: General Provisions – Public Campaign Financing. The purpose of this bill is to establish a public campaign financing fund to provide an optional funding source for candidates running for county executive or county council. The Fair Elections Maryland Coalition, as well as a majority of those testifying, supported the effort.

In February 2022, County Executive Pittman introduced Resolution 1-22, a proposed campaign finance ballot measure for the November 2022 election to allow voters to decide the issue. The ballot measure failed to get the 5-2 super majority vote of the Council needed for a proposed ballot measure.

The League's testimony in favor of Bill 25-23 and Resolution 1-22 was based on the conclusions of a national public campaign financing study conducted by the League of Women Voters of the United States. The resulting LWVUS position is "Campaign finance regulation should enhance political equality for all citizens, ensure transparency, protect representative democracy from distortion by big money, and combat corruption and

undue influence in government. The League believes that campaign spending must be restricted but not banned. The League supports public financing, full disclosure, abolishing SuperPACs and creating an effective enforcement agency."

Council voted on and passed the measure on June 5, making Anne Arundel County the sixth local, small donor public financing program in the state, joining Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Howard County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County." #

## Join Us

We invite you to join County Executive Stuart Pittman and community leaders as the County Executive signs Bill 25-23, Public Campaign Financing, into law.

**Bill 25-23:** Establishes a voluntary system of public campaign financing for candidates running for County Council and County Executive, allowing candidates to run for county offices without having to rely on well financed corporate donors or special interests.

**TUESDAY**  
**JUNE**  
**13**  
**3:15PM**



Streaming Live on  
[www.facebook.com/AACoExec](https://www.facebook.com/AACoExec)



## Council moves to change habits and reduce plastic

By Abby Root, Director & Action Co-Chair

In early April, I seized the opportunity to represent the LWVAAC at a County Council meeting with favorable testimony on Bill 19-23, Ban the Bag Act of Anne Arundel County. Since then, the bill has been amended four times, including the title, which is now Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act. The purpose of the bill is to prohibit the retail distribution of plastic bags in the county at the point of sale.

Our League's favorable stance is based on our solid waste position, which "supports a program of solid waste management that protects public health and environment through promotions of source reduction, recycling, and adoption of a conservation ethic among individuals, businesses, and government."

Human behavior often changes when we must pay out of pocket for a bad habit. There's evidence that consumers begin using reusable bags when charged a fee for paper or plastic. Plastic is bad, but paper bags also pollute the planet for years to come.

Lawmakers need not to look far for a plastic bag success story. The District's Anacostia River Clean Up and Protection Act of 2009, commonly known as the "bag law" was the first of its kind in the nation. It requires District businesses that sell food or alcohol to charge a \$0.05 fee for each paper and plastic bag distributed with any purchase, with certain exemptions, of course. The primary goal of this bag law is to change



*County Council hears testimony on legislation to reduce plastic waste and encourage reusable shopping bags.*

consumer behavior by discouraging use of disposable bags, thereby reducing trash pollution in the District's waterways. Bag fee revenue is deposited into an Anacostia River special-purpose fund that's managed by the District's Department of Energy and Environment.

Montgomery County, in 2012, passed legislation that requires retail establishments that provide customers a carryout bag at the point of sale to charge 5 cents per bag.

Since then, Baltimore City, Baltimore County and the Town of Easton, Maryland have followed suit with different variations on the restrictions and fees.

On June 5, 2023, the Anne Arundel County Council voted 6 to 1 in favor of Bill 19-23, Bring Your Own Bag Plastic Reduction Act, which now awaits the County Executive's signature. The legislation restricts most retailers from offering plastic bags and requires them to charge 10 cents a piece for paper bags. #

## Voter Services

### Election News

By Vera Herath, Director, Voter Services Co-Chair

Late in the 90-day session of the Maryland General Assembly, a number of bills related to voting passed in both chambers and were signed by Governor Wes Moore on April 24, 2023. A brief description of each bill is as follows:

**House Bill 535** (cross-filed with Senate Bill 379):

This bill changes state election law in several ways. It provides voters with more options to correct signature problems (a missing or unclear signature) on their mail-in ballots to ensure that their ballot will be accepted and counted. It also allows local boards of election to begin processing mail-in ballots before Election Day. Did you know that Maryland was the only state in the nation not permitted to begin processing, including counting, until after Election Day? Further, the bill changes the date of the 2024 primary election from April 23 to May 14, with early voting set for May 2 through 9. These date changes avoid conflicts with the religious holidays Passover and Ramadan and a conflict with the legislative session which doesn't end until mid-April.

**House Bill 1200** (cross-filed with Senate Bill 925): This bill addresses a recent shortage of election judges. It specifies that each election judge who has not previously served as an election judge must be paid at least \$250 per day

for each Election Day and early voting day served. It also states that the compensation for these days must be at least \$100 more per day for experienced election judges than the compensation provided to an inexperienced election judge. The state election board will partially reimburse local election boards for the compensation. The state board of elections also is required to develop and provide to the local boards a marketing campaign to recruit individuals to serve as election judges.

### Have you heard?

**Maryland's 2024  
Presidential Primary  
Election will be held on  
Tuesday, May 14.**

**Senate Bill 863** (cross-filed with House Bill 899) changes how the Maryland Board of Elections would remove the Maryland Administrator of Elections, who oversees elections in the state.

**Senate Bill 287** (cross-filed with House Bill 509): This bill requires the State Board of Elections to publish municipal election results on its website immediately after a municipality submits its election results; and requiring, within 30 days after the results of a municipal election are certified, the municipality to submit to the State Board an electronic copy of the election results for each office or question voted on at the election.

Speaking of election judges, the Anne Arundel County Board of Elections is hard at work preparing for next year, including hiring judges – yes, already! Check out the AAC BOE [website](#) or call 410-222-6600 for more information and to apply. Try it, you'll like it! #



The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Annapolis Pride Parade & Festival was held on June 3. LWVAAC provided voter services from a prominent location on West Street. The colorful, pop-up canopies of exhibitors dotted the parade route and food vendors were plentiful. Live music enhanced the festive mood.



Thank you League registrars and helpers (l-r) Anne Myers, Vicki Jordan, Hannah Collins, Delia Miller, and (not shown) Kathy Larrabee and Everett Jordan for logistics.



## June is Gun Violence Awareness Month

(left) Wearing orange to show her support for ending gun violence, LWVAAC member Anne Myers prepares to register voters at the Gun Violence Awareness Wellness Fair, held at the Pip Moyer Recreation Center on June 4. The event was sponsored by the City of Annapolis' NO HARM VIP violence prevention program, in partnership with Moms Demand Action. Food was free, live music filled the air. Elected officials spoke passionately about the need to end gun violence and invited the public to help them do their jobs better. The rally closed with heartrending messages from moms who have lost children to gun violence or whose children have committed gun-related crimes. (Photos: K. Larrabee)

## In League

### LWVMD Holds Biennial Convention

By LWVAAC Delegates Amanda SubbaRao, Alexis Dorsey, Abby Root and Dona Sauerburger

The 2023 State League Convention took place June 2-4, hosted by the Frederick LWV. It was LWVMD's first-ever hybrid event, offering both in-person and online participation in the plenary sessions and six of the nine workshops.

LWVAAC was well-represented, by four voting delegates (three in person and one via Zoom), whose reports appear below, as well as Gege and Kate Polevitzky and LWVMD Executive Director Nikki Tyree.

Along with State League business, sessions included a presentation by the LWVUS liaison to Maryland, Tracy Adkison. Tracy provided an overview of the strategic plan to strengthen the League at all levels, as discussed by Dr. Deborah Turner in her 2023 State of the League Address. Opportunities to get involved with the strategic planning will be forthcoming.

Jessica Fitzwater, the Frederick County Executive, spoke about the importance of focusing on local needs in a community-driven, inclusive way.

At the Saturday evening Gala, a member from each League was honored with the Annette and Malcolm Funn Award. Their son, Kelby Funn, spoke about the importance of the League in his parents' life.

During the plenary sessions, two statewide studies were approved. One will investigate expanding LWVMD's existing position on drunk driving to address impaired or distracted driving. A second study will review the existing LWVMD education position to try to reach consensus on "local control of education," in light of the passage of the Blueprint for the Future of Maryland. In addition, delegates voted to drop two LWVMD positions, on firearms and health care, because there are more comprehensive and recent positions on those issues at the national League level. All Leagues can base advocacy on LWVUS positions.

[see next page]



### Meet New LWVMD President Linda Kohn

Linda retired in 2016 from the legislative branch where she was a member of the Senior Executive Service, focusing on various health care issues. Linda earned a Master's in public health from the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in health policy from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. When she retired in 2016, Linda volunteered as a chef's assistant at a French cooking school in Bethesda and (tried to) learn how to play acoustic drums. She enjoys baking bread (started that long ago) and going for walks with her husband, Richard, and their airedale terrier Maggie.



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In all, nine workshops were offered over the course of the 2-day Convention. Following are brief descriptions of the ones LWVAAC delegates attended or taught:

### Positions & How to Use Them

This workshop on how to use League positions for advocacy was presented by Linda Kohn (LWVMD) and Rebecca Goldman (LWVUS). League positions are backed by studies conducted at either local, state, or national levels. Without a position, there can be no advocacy. Rebecca and Linda discussed how to find the “Goldilocks” wording for positions to maximize their usefulness for advocacy. If a position is too detailed, it may be hard to find a way to advocate for closely related issues, and if it is too vague, it can be hard to apply. They also suggested ways of combining two or more existing positions to allow a League to be nimbler in their advocacy as issues or bills arise.

### Why They Don’t Teach Civics Anymore

Genie Massey presented on civics instruction in Maryland schools. The Maryland Blueprint de-emphasizes social studies in the curriculum, and the word “civics” is only mentioned once in the entire document. She stressed that civics isn’t just about gaining knowledge, but also developing the skills, habits, values, and disposition required for students to be engaged citizens. After sharing statistics about student and school performances in civics, she recommended ways of supporting civics and social studies in local schools, as well as resources for learning or supporting activities. She highlighted two activities of our League that encourage civics

education in public schools. LWVAAC is in its second year of sponsoring the Harvard Case Study program in Anne Arundel County public high schools and will demonstrate the teaching method to the public on June 22

([register here](#)). Also LWVAAC helped judge student projects in the county’s National History Day contest, along with sponsoring a prize.

### Election Reforms: Recent and Future

The focus of this very informative workshop was Ranked Choice Voting (RCV); what it is, how it works and why it should be adopted as an election method. RCV is an election method in which voters rank candidates for an office in order of their preference (first choice, second choice, third choice, etc.) Then, if a candidate receives more than half of the first choices, that candidate wins. If there is no majority winner after counting the first choices, the race is decided by an instant runoff tabulated by the voting machine. The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voters who ranked that candidate as their first choice will have their votes count for their next choice. The process continues until a majority winner, a candidate with more than half of the vote wins.



[see next page]



[continued from p. 14]

*RCV promotes civil campaigns.* Since candidates compete for second- and third-choice votes, the incentive for negative campaigning is reduced. RCV eliminates vote splitting and strategic voting. Voters get to rank their preferences without worrying about who they think is most likely to win, allowing voters to choose who they truly want. Also, RCV makes it easier for women and candidates of color to run for office and win.

*RCV increases participation.* Military and overseas voters can rank candidates on a single ballot. If a runoff occurs, the ranked ballot is counted for whichever candidate in the runoff is ranked highest.

Takoma Park is the only municipality in Maryland using Ranked Choice Voting.

### **Voting and Accessibility**

This workshop focused on the federal and state requirements of accessibility for handicapped individuals and encouraged League members to seek volunteer opportunities to assist nursing home residents, blind citizens and others exercise their right to vote.

### **Energizing Youth Voters**

Presenters Genie Massey and Nile Blass noted that "Youth Voters" includes not just high school and college students but also young professionals age 22-29. They emphasized that it is important to approach them where they normally congregate and follow their lead. Attendees also explored current trends, such as the role of social media and peer-to-peer outreach.

[continued next page]

## **Lobby Day on Capitol Hill**

By Abby Root, Director and Action Co-chair

LWVMD hosted its Lobby Day on Capitol Hill virtually on May 15. This annual event is an opportunity for League members to learn lobbying skills and immediately put them to practice. The League's focus this year was on voting rights.

Over 80 Maryland League members joined in via Zoom. We met with Representatives Raskin, Mfume, Trone, and Ivey, along with staff to Representatives Harris, Ruppersberger, and Hoyer. We also talked with Senator Cardin. I especially enjoyed meeting with Jacob Nishimura, a member of Congressman Hoyer's staff. Jacob noted the League's concerns about voting rights legislation and appreciated our desire to help build bi-partisan support to move it along.

Because neither Congressman Sarbanes nor Senator Van Hollen were available on Monday, LWVMD President Nancy Soreng and Jackie Coolidge of the Montgomery County LWV met with the Congressman and a staffer to the Senator the next day, stressing the challenges many people still face when participating in elections despite recent voting rights progress.

Lobby Day is a long day, but it's an enlightening experience I highly recommend to all League members. #

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## **Polarization: What Can We Do? The League and Braver Angels**

by Dona Sauerburger, LWVAAC and Braver Angels member

I was very pleased to be invited to lead a Convention workshop, along with Cindy Mullock, another active member of Braver Angels. Our opening discussion revealed that everyone who attended is alarmed at the deep polarization that has gripped our country, making us less able to work together.

So, what can be done? Cindy and I suggested we start with ourselves, and the participants went through an exercise to measure their own polarization. Many of them laughed when they realized they have some work to do!

Cindy then explained the workshops, debates, town halls and other activities that Braver Angels offers. The mission of Braver Angels, which started after the polarizing election of 2016, is to help bring people together, to understand and be understood by others. Their events, for example, are structured to build understanding and find common ground rather than be a podium to make points and argue. Their workshops help people gain the skills they need to bridge the divide.

This is one of many aspects that Braver Angels shares with the League. Both organizations pledge nonpartisanship and welcome all points of view, as when the League develops a position.

This is why I was so excited at Convention to share two Braver Angels' initiatives that I think are perfectly suited for our state League. One is a network of organizations like ourselves that want to address the toxic polarization. It is called *Braver Network*. I directed the LWVMD Board to consider joining.

The other is a series of Braver Angels' *Trustworthy Elections* workshops being held in each state to bring conservatives and liberals together to find common ground on election reform. In September Braver Angels will report what both sides seem to agree needs to happen to restore trust in our elections. I directed our LWVMD Board to consider hosting a *Trustworthy Election* workshop here in Maryland.

At our Braver Angels workshop I also proposed doing a League study on polarization: what causes it, what problems does it raise, and what we can do about it. I'm hoping that our local League will consider suggesting such a study to our state. #

## League Events

### AAC Public Schools Superintendent Caps Annual Membership Meeting

By Kathy Larrabee, Director, Communications Chair

Dr. Mark Bedell, in his first year as Anne Arundel County Superintendent of Schools, provided League members and guests at the April annual meeting compassionate insight into the school system's post Covid challenges. The Crown Plaza Hotel in Annapolis served as a perfect venue for this annual meeting. A pleasant buzz graced the room as League members reconnected and made new acquaintances over a delicious brunch buffet. A business meeting preceded Dr. Bedell's remarks.

Dr. Bedell began with a personal account of his childhood to help explain why he fully understands the toll Covid has taken on vulnerable students. He shared that he grew up the oldest of 8 children in a family where domestic violence made public school his safe place. He expects it will take some time to repair the mental health and the trauma many students experienced because of isolation during the pandemic.

Looking ahead, Dr. Bedell spoke of nationwide school shootings and other violent acts. Referring to several recent national tragedies, he said, "We will not let that kind of violence come to Anne Arundel County schools." He said, in the last 6 years he served the Kansas City (Missouri) school system, several children died from gun shots. "I've experienced trauma and pain, impediments to the kids focusing on academics," he said. "Parents expect us to educate and return children back to them."

He emphasized the importance of community and schools working together for the greater good of the children,



*Dr. Mark Bedell addresses LWVAAC members and guests at the April 15 Annual Meeting. (Photo by K. Larrabee)*

referencing a new AACPS pilot program known as #BEPRESENT. While with the Houston school system, Dr. Bedell created a similar program, which invites volunteers within a school community to be present in their neighborhood schools before and after school, or during lunch periods. The goal is for volunteers to form relationships with the students, he said, adding that the presence of community members brings stability to lunchrooms and

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hallways. Volunteers currently are being trained; they will not have security responsibilities.

Dr. Bedell joked that he might not have accepted the position as AACPS Superintendent if he'd known he'd be tasked to oversee redistricting. Because it is a huge undertaking, he plans to tackle it in two phases. The first phase will involve the northern part of the county and second phase will examine school boundaries in the remainder of the county. The two-phase process will help to fill the more than 16,000 empty seats throughout AAC school districts.

Dr. Bedell predicted, "No matter what we do, 50 percent of parents will be happy, and 50 percent will be unhappy." For more information about our public schools' redistricting process, click [here](#).

To learn more about AACPS and business of the AACPS Board of Education, consider attending BOE meetings in person or from the comfort of your home. [Meetings are televised and livestreamed on the AACPS YouTube channel](#). #



*LWVAAC members and guests enjoyed the opportunity to catch up over brunch during the 2023 Annual Membership Meeting at the Sheraton Crowne Plaza Hotel in Annapolis on Saturday, April 15. (Photo by K. Larrabee)*

## March Book Discussion & Luncheon

Following COVID isolation, many of us prize simple gatherings. LWVAAC members recently were grateful for the chance to meet in person to discuss the book, *The Other Wes Moore*, authored by Wes Moore, Maryland's new governor. Members noted the ways the author's teenage life informed his ideas on governing and juvenile justice and the importance influence a strong family network has on a young person's path.

After adjourning the meeting at Busch Annapolis library, members picked the conversation back up over lunch at Paul's Homewood Cafe. #



*Thank you Marg Duffy, Events Chair, for choosing a good read, a quiet place to talk about it, and Paul's Homewood Café for a delicious lunch. (Photo by K. Larrabee)*