



THE VOTER

A Quarterly Newsletter of the LWVAAC

March 2024, Issue 132

League Calendar of Events

LWVAAC Board Meeting (virtual)
Tue, Mar 12, 4:30-6 p.m.

LWVMD/LWVMoCo Workshop (virtual)
Artificial Intelligence & Election Threats
Sat, Mar 16, 9:30 a.m. [RSVP](#)

LWVAAC Books for Learning (in person)
Madness: Race and Insanity in a Jim Crow Asylum
Fri, Mar 22, 2-3:30 p.m.
Busch Annapolis Library, 1410 West St. [RSVP](#)

LWVAAC Ready to Vote! program (hybrid)
Thu, Mar 28, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Crofton Library, 1681 Riedel Rd, Crofton

LWVAAC Observer Corps Mtg (in person)
Tue, Apr 2, 2 p.m.
Home of Alexis Dorsey

LWVAAC Program Planning 2024-25 (virtual)
Sun, Apr 7, 2-3 p.m. [RSVP](#)

LWVAAC Board Meeting (virtual)
Tue, Apr 9, 7-8:30 p.m.

LWVAAC Millersville Landfill Tour (in person)
Tue, Apr 16, 2-4 p.m.
389 Burns Crossing Rd, Severn [RSVP](#)

LWVAAC Annual Membership Meeting & 80th Anniversary Celebration (in person)
Wed, May 15, 5-7:30 p.m.
Pip Moyer Rec Center, 273 Hilltop Ln, Annapolis

LWVMD Biennial Council (TBA)
Sat, Jun 1

LWVUS National Convention (hybrid)
Jun 27-30, Washington, DC and online

LWVAAC Online

Amanda SubbaRao, President, pres@lwvaacmd.org

Alexis Dorsey, VP, vp@lwvaacmd.org

Voter Services, votersvc@lwvaacmd.org

Membership, memb-aac@lwvmd.org

Editorial Staff, editor@lwvaacmd.org

LWVAAC Directors, board-aac@lwvmd.org

Website: www.lwvaacmd.org

Facebook: [@lwvaac](https://www.facebook.com/lwvaac) Phone: 443-672-8270

Join/Renew: www.lwvaacmd.org/join2

Donate: lwvaacmd.org/efdonation

Voter Toolkit: lwvaacmd.org/voter_toolkit

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Happy Saint Patrick's Day!

President's Message

"What may seem like small acts to us—setting up a registration booth, sharing a VOTE411 resource, encouraging someone to write their local elected official—can be life-changing for the people we encounter."

~ Dr. Deborah Ann Turner

It was with great sadness that we learned in late January of the death of the LWVUS president, Dr. Deborah Ann Turner. Dr. Turner was a staunch advocate of both voting rights and women's rights. She became the 20th LWVUS president in 2020 as the League celebrated its 100th year. As president, she guided the League through a pandemic and on a Transformation Journey, demonstrating inspirational leadership throughout.

Dr. Turner lived a life of service. She earned an M.D. from the University of Iowa, and a J.D. from Drake University. As a physician, she practiced gynecological oncology for 35 years, advocating for more inclusive health care policies. She also participated in multiple medical programs in Tanzania, through the



Iowa-based Outreach Program. She joined the LWV of Metro Des Moines in 2010, serving as local League president from 2011-2015 and also as an officer of the LWV of Iowa, rising to state League co-president in 2015. In 2016, she was elected to the LWVUS board, and served as the Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee before becoming president.

Dr. Turner believed that the League's strength stems from the grassroots power of state and local Leagues. Yet, sometimes maintaining democracy can seem so daunting that it is easy to lose sight of the fact that big changes are often a cumulation of many small actions. We must remember that the work of the LWVAAAC to support and educate voters and to advocate for our positions makes a difference. We all can continue Dr. Turner's legacy by giving one unheard voice a platform to be heard, encouraging one eligible voter to vote, or providing reliable information to one person trying to make an informed decision about our democracy. Taking action is like dropping a pebble into a lake—the ripples may seem small where you are now, but they can travel an incredible distance.



Amanda SubbaRao

~ Amanda

Member Spotlight

Faces of our League

Christiana Logansmith

What prompted you to join the League?

While campaigning for a LT Governor of Maryland (libertarian party) candidate in 2022, I noted the League's scrupulous inclusion of all candidates in voter education efforts, including debates. Other major civics institutions were not inclusive.

What civics issues do you care most about?

I care most about freedom of speech, the rule of law, and equality of opportunity—with a focus on K-12 education and the healthcare system.

What is/was your primary career?

My husband and I owned a commercial cleaning firm for 32 years. Our business allowed me to glimpse behind the scenes at all kinds of businesses and institutions and to work with people from a wide range of backgrounds.

What might other members be interested in knowing about you?

I went to college through the NROTC program and lived in Japan for 2 years while on active duty.



Member since 2023



Member since 2023

Laniel Brown

What prompted you to join the League?

I wanted to learn more about the League's work.

What civics issues do you care most about?

I am concerned about voting rights.

What is/was your primary career?

I'm with Verizon Communications, Public Sector.

What might other members be interested in knowing about you?

I love to travel. I also enjoy community service projects. And, I'm a proud member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated.

League Events

Local focus for next Books for Learning

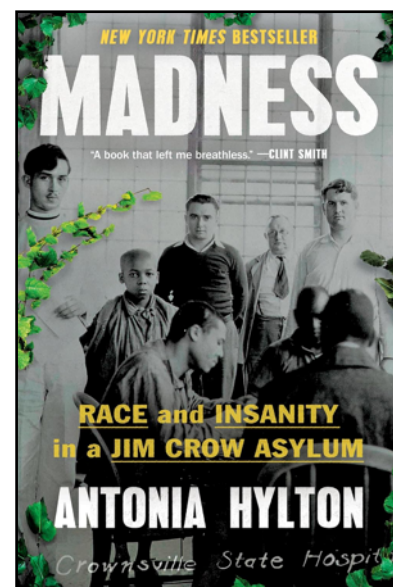
When: Friday, March 22, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Where: Busch Annapolis Library, 1410 West St, Annapolis

RSVP: lwvaacmd.org/bks3_22_24

LWVAAC continues its Books for Learning program with a discussion of Antonia Hylton's *Madness: Race and Insanity in a Jim Crow Asylum*. Described by the New York Times as “fascinating...meticulous research,” Hylton's book uses official records, newspaper reports and personal accounts to chronicle the disturbing history of Crownsville Hospital in Anne Arundel County. Originally established in 1911 as the Hospital for the Negro Insane of Maryland, Crownsville Hospital impacted the lives of thousands of Black families before closing in 2004.

Distinguished educator and Touchstones discussion leader Cynthia Barry will moderate. The book is available at county public libraries.#



2024-25 LWVAAC program planning wrap-up

When: Sunday, April 7, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Where: Zoom

RSVP: lwvaacmd.org/24_pp

The League's annual program planning process seeks to answer two questions.

- *Do LWVAAC's activities advance the League mission of empowering voters and defending democracy in Anne Arundel County?*
- *Do they address local issues of concern to our members?*

This year's Symposium series (see p. 6) shed light on current policies and programs in Anne Arundel County as well as opportunities for League action. On April 7, members will evaluate League positions and prioritize options for mission-related work in the next program year.

Members may submit input via a [questionnaire](#) and by attending the April 7 virtual program planning session, led by Action Chair Abby Root. Please email Abby at action@lwvaacmd.org if you have any questions.#

Earth Day 2024: Planet vs. Plastics



Date: Tuesday, April 16

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Place: 389 Burns Crossing Rd, Severn

RSVP: lwvaacmd.org/24earthday_aac

For Earth Day 2024, the national organization EARTHDAY.ORG is taking on plastics, demanding a 60% reduction in the production of ALL plastics by 2040, for the sake of human and planetary health.

In support of this goal, LWVAAC has arranged a guided tour of the Millersville Landfill and Resource Recovery Facility. Participants will learn firsthand what happens to discarded plastic and other waste in Anne Arundel County as well as ways to reduce, reuse and recycle. Included in the tour:



- Scalehouse
- Maintenance Shop
- Landfill Recycling area
- Landfill Active Disposal area
- Leachate Pre-treatment facility
- Landfill Gas-to-Energy facility
- Composting facility

Space is limited. RSVP by April 9 to ensure a spot. Please email program@lwvaacmd.org for more information.#

SAVE THE DATE: 2024 Annual Membership Meeting

What: Business meeting, light buffet and keynote speaker

When: Wednesday, May 15, 5:00 to 7:30 p.m.

Where: Pip Moyer Recreation Center, 273 Hilltop Lane, Annapolis

Details: Invitations and meeting materials will be emailed in early April

Help Celebrate LWVAAC's 80th Anniversary

Winter symposium series informs LWVAAC program planning process

In the League, the word “program” may refer to a wide range of activities, such as consensus studies, educational initiatives, voter services, community outreach, observing government and lobbying. Program planning is the process of identifying the focus of a League’s activities in the coming fiscal year.

This winter, LWVAAC engaged in local program planning in a novel way, looking at our existing public policy positions individually as subjects of a symposium series. The hour-long afternoon sessions were held virtually and featured an outside speaker with local knowledge and expertise. Each symposium yielded opportunities for future League advocacy and action. Recordings of the meetings may be viewed [here](#).

The symposiums will inform LWVAAC’s local program planning session which is scheduled for Sunday, April 7 at 2 p.m. via Zoom (see p. 4).

Symposium I: Planning & Zoning (Jan 7)

Speaker Matt Minahan, Executive Director, Growth Action Network (GAN)

GAN believes establishing an independent planning commission is key to effective land use in Anne Arundel County. As defined by the Maryland Department of Planning, a “planning commission is responsible for working with the community to craft a

long-range, comprehensive plan, and for implementing that plan.” In contrast to the current AA County Planning Advisory Board, a planning commission would have the authority to review and make recommendations on land use applications and variance requests before they go before the AA County Office of Planning and Zoning and County Council. GAN believes a planning commission would improve compliance with the County’s comprehensive zoning plans.

LWVAAC’s position calls for strong enforcement of existing land use controls, such as zoning, and could be applied in support of a petition drive to establish a planning commission.

Symposium II: Waste Management (Jan 21)

Speaker Richard Bowen, County Recycling and Waste Reduction Division Manager

Anne Arundel County has submitted its Solid Waste Management Plan for 2024-2033 to the Maryland Department of the Environment. The plan documents the current volume of waste and recyclables generated countywide and contains future projections and a plan of action. The top

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Edgewater
Sandra Rivera
Ellen Shiery

Glen Burnie
Ann Sanford



Odenton
Anna Rahim

Riva
Sherri Calvo

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priority is “implementing new initiatives and establishing programs and systems that respond to regulatory change and promote a hierarchical flow from source reduction and reuse, to recycling and composting, while further reducing disposal.”

The County’s solid waste management priority is consistent with the LWVAAC position. League members can act by encouraging use of the County’s Recycling Coach app and promoting the message to *Reduce, Recycle, Reuse, Donate*.

Symposium III: Immigration (Feb 4)

Speaker Alison Flores, Director of the Anne Arundel County Office of Hispanic/Latino and Multicultural Resources

In 2023, Ms. Flores became the first director of the AAC Office of Hispanic/Latino and Multicultural Resources. She shared her vision for the new County office and elaborated on her benchmarking efforts with a number of community and government leaders, who have vast knowledge of the county’s Hispanic and Latino populations, to prepare for her new role.

She said building a multicultural center is a high priority for County Executive Stuart Pittman. In January, Mr. Pittman made a \$10 million capital request to the Governor, which became an item in an omnibus capital bill, SB361. Ultimately \$5 million was requested; the outcome of the bill is

pending. The bill language allows for a grant to the County that may be applied to any phase of developing a new multicultural center in AAC. A site for the center hasn’t been determined.



Anne Arundel County’s Latino population has grown nearly 49 percent since the 2010 Census and currently makes up 9.4 percent of the County’s population.

Ms. Flores envisions the center as a social hub as well as a space for residents of a multitude of backgrounds to learn about resources available to them and participate in educational programs.

The LWVAAC immigration position was adopted in 2010 and remains relevant today. Mirroring the LWVUS immigration position, it calls for a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status and to engage in civic duties. It supports humane treatment for all and is against deportation of law-abiding immigrants.

Symposium IV: Transportation (Feb 22)

Speaker Samuel Snead, Director of Anne Arundel County Office of Transportation

The Office of Transportation’s mission is “to provide equitable multi-modal transportation options for all.” The functions of the Office are categorized as follows: transportation planning, transportation operations, capital projects, grant management and innovation. Mr. Snead shared

NOTE: Laura Gutierrez, Chair, Anne Arundel County Immigrant Affairs Commission, was expected to be the primary speaker but failed to join the meeting.

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an organization chart and noted the many and multi-modal areas of responsibility, including highway traffic, transit, bicycle and pedestrian systems. He provided an overview of Move Anne Arundel (2019) and the County's Functional Master Plan that aims to enhance mobility and accessibility for all residents, as well as Walk & Roll Anne Arundel (2023), and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, which envisions ways for people to be mobile beyond using a vehicle.



The AA County Office of Transportation is currently working on the Transit Development Plan, which must be updated every 5 years. Public hearings are underway now to gather community input.

LWVAAC's transportation position supports the development and improvement of public transportation and encourages professional studies and the development of appropriate proposals for meeting the needs of various sectors of the population. This is consistent with the mission and programs of the Office of Transportation.

Symposium V: Affordable Housing (Mar 3)

Speaker Erin Karpewicz, CEO, Arundel Community Development Services (ACDS)

The definition of affordable or workforce housing depends upon the income levels and resources of the individual or families you're addressing. ACDS addresses the needs of people whose income is 60 percent or less of the area median income (AMI). The County's AMI (\$121,700 in 2023) is determined by the U.S. Census of the Baltimore Metro Area and used by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) to determine grant funding to states and counties for housing needs. HUD considers individuals or families to be cost-burdened if paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. In AAC, about 45 percent of renters are cost burdened and about 50 percent of homeowners are cost burdened.

Over the past 3 years, rental prices in AAC rose dramatically from \$1,566 per month in 2019 to \$1,893 in 2022. In 2023, the median home sale price in AAC was \$470,000, an increase of 35 percent, while median household incomes rose only by about 17 percent. An individual or family would need an annual income of \$150,000 to afford a median priced home.

ACDS is equipped to provide direct programming and, also, manage funding awards with partner organizations. Ms. Karpewicz described numerous assistance programs, ranging from first-time home buyer counseling to eviction assistance and homelessness strategies. She

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lauded AA County Executive Pittman for his efforts to establish the Housing Trust Fund with seed money and then with legislation that generates about \$7M to \$10M annually for the Trust from transfer tax fees on realty property sales of \$1M or more. Thus far in 2024, through the Trust Fund and other incentive programs for developers,

424 new rental units have been created and 1,122 existing units revitalized. However, an ACDS study done several years ago determined AAC is short 12,000 units for households earning 60 percent of AMI and below, which is up from a 9,000 unit shortage in 2019.

ACDS uses several tools to help renters, such as a voucher program to subsidize rent. However, voucher-available units are scarce. Other tools create incentives for developers, such as lower costs for water/sewer hookups; loans from the county (to be repaid and reinvested); and adjusted property tax. The county can also donate excess land for affordable housing to be built. Zoning and land use changes can allow for greater density in some neighborhoods. For example, “upzoning” from R5 to R22 increases the number of potential units per acre from 5 to 22.

Ms. Karpewicz encouraged League members to continue advocating for affordable housing by supporting county and state legislation, attending small area planning meetings, and writing letters in favor of upzoning. #



Voter Services

A big election year ahead

by Vera Herath, Voter Services Co-Chair

Even while enjoying the relative calm of winter, the LWVAAC Voter Services team has been actively preparing for the upcoming elections. We have a number of voter services events lined up, well into summer and fall.

Preparing voters

Providing voter services to inmates at the Jennifer Road Detention Center in Annapolis requires special permission and skills. Yet, in February, Voter Services Co-Chair Vicki Jordan visited the Center twice, registering a total of 22 people to vote. In early March, Vicki registered eight inmates at the Ordinance Road Correctional Center in Glen Burnie. Huge kudos to Vicki for her work to ensure all eligible voters are registered and informed!

LWVAAC has long enjoyed a strong, working relationship with Anne Arundel County public libraries (AACPL). Upon requests from the Crofton and Eastport-Annapolis Neck branches, our Voter Services team has helped develop a program called Ready to Vote!. The program will be held at the Crofton Library on March 28 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and at the Eastport-Annapolis Neck branch in late August. LWVAAC presenters will be joined by Nicole Hill, data application specialist with the Anne Arundel County Board of Elections, at both libraries. The program is open to the public; no registration required.

Also on the calendar for this summer, the Voter Services team has confirmed LWVAAC's participation in the 3rd Annual Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival scheduled for June 1. If you care about voting rights and voter education, please [sign up](#) to work a shift with your Voter Services team on this festive day.

July 4th is a special voter services day for LWVAAC. League volunteers have provided voter registration to newly naturalized citizens every year since 2007 when Historic Annapolis began hosting an Independence Day Naturalization Ceremony on the grounds of the William Paca House in Annapolis. Stop by at 9 a.m. to witness the ceremony and lend a hand to your League. You have our word...there's no more inspirational way to start your 4th of July.

Moving onto the fall, the Voter Services team has arranged a voter registration event at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) on September 17, which happens this year to be both National Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day. We look forward to collaborating with AACC's Director of Student Engagement on additional events.

Providing candidate information

This year's Anne Arundel County Board of Education election is important for many reasons. All seven nonpartisan Board of Education seats are up for election, and all County voters, not just those affiliated with a party, will vote for Board of Education candidates

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in the primary election. The two receiving the most votes will advance to the general election. Districts 1, 3, 4, and 5 have three or more candidates vying in the primary.

Congressman John Sarbanes' retirement has resulted in a significant contest for the U.S. House of Representatives 3rd Congressional District seat. Primary election ballots will include nine Republican candidates and 22 Democratic contenders.

LWVAAC Voter Services plans to hold two candidate forums in the fall: one for Board of Education contenders and one for 3rd Congressional District candidates. Because the 3rd Congressional District contains large portions of both Howard and Anne Arundel counties, LWVAAC is collaborating with the LWV of Howard County to co-sponsor a forum. The time and place will be announced soon. Please consider helping your Voter Services team organize and execute this large and important public event.

Recruiting election workers

The Anne Arundel County Board of Elections (BOE) is currently seeking to hire another 600 election judges to fill the 2,251 positions needed for the 2024 election cycle. Judges receive training and are paid according to levels of responsibility.

The BOE inaugurated the Election Day page program in 2022. A page is a student, 14 years old or older, who volunteers for a 4-hour shift at a polling place, earning community service learning credit. The BOE's goal for 2024 is to

engage 100 Election Day pages, up from 19 in 2022. To date, 31 pages have signed up. Go to www.aacounty.org/elections or call 410-222-6600 to volunteer and/or get additional information.

The LWVAAC Voter Services team needs and appreciates your time, knowledge, and care. Please [email Vera](#) to volunteer! #

Voter Services Dates

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| March 28 | Ready to Vote! Crofton Library |
| April 1 | VOTE411.org goes live |
| April 23 | Advance deadline to register to vote or update voter information |
| May 2 – 9 | Primary Election Early Voting
7:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. (in person) |
| May 14 | Primary Election Day
7:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. (in person)
Mail-in ballots must be postmarked on or before this date, or deposited in a BOE dropbox no later than 8:00 p.m. |
| June 1 | Third Annual Annapolis Pride Parade and Festival |
| July 4 | Naturalization Ceremony at William Paca House |



Community Outreach

LWVAAC members judge turning points in history

By Kathy Larrabee, Director

Each year, more than 30,000 middle and high school students in classrooms throughout Maryland's school districts immerse themselves in research projects to be entered in the Regional History Day contest. The competition is sponsored by Maryland Humanities, an affiliate of National History Day® (NHD), which is a nonprofit, education organization that improves teaching and learning of history and civics.

LWVAAC was honored to provide volunteer judges for the Anne Arundel County school district's NHD competition again this year. League members Hannah Collins and Lynn Mortoro answered the call to help judge the projects. In addition to providing volunteer judges, LWVAAC also sponsored a Special Award for the winner of the project best representing Women's History.

The 2024 NHD theme is *Turning Points in History*. A turning point is an idea, event, or action that directly or indirectly causes change. Students may work individually or in small groups to create projects that require critical thinking, research, analysis, writing, and public speaking skills. There are five award categories—documentary, paper, website, performance, and

poster exhibit. One project in each category may be nominated for a Special Award, in addition to, or including, the nominees for overall 1st and 2nd place winners. The top two winners go on to represent the region at state and national competitions. Maryland Humanities provides professional development for the teachers of students who wish to compete. Volunteer judges also receive training.



League member Hannah Collins, who is a college freshman this year, helped judge term papers. "I observed very impressive and well thought-out analyses of the various events that have shaped the modern world," she noted. "My co-judge and I reviewed each paper for the first 2 hours of the judging period, and then we interviewed each of the students. Following the interviews, we nominated the students for the awards we believed they had a chance of winning." Hannah thinks the NHD competition

showcases the very best of the county's public school system. "I look forward to seeing the much-deserving winners of the awards," she adds.

League member Lynn Mortoro says she signed up last minute to judge, wanting to help the League. She



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found the experience was far beyond her expectation. “Judging history-related projects was so out of my comfort zone--I knew nothing of what the kids were working on these days or the expectations of me as a judge,” she said. “I was assigned to judge group documentaries produced by junior and senior students.”



Member Lynn Mortoro prepares to present LWVAAC's prize bag for the Special Award for the NHD project best representing Women's History. (photo by K. Larrabee)

Lynn partnered with a dedicated high school history teacher to critique the documentaries, which already had been deemed the best by individual county schools where they originated. “The research and creativity of some of these projects were outstanding,” she said, giving several examples: “One pertained to the Jim Crow era at the University of Texas in the early 1950s, and another was about a

brother-sister team, who used the resources of their aunt, a scientist, to research breast cancer because their mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer.”

Cindy Barry, who judged NHD projects in 2023, and Hannah and Lynn have already staked claims for judging in 2025. NHD judges believe participation can equip students with an understanding of history and civics they may not fully appreciate until they enter college or careers. #



In honor of Women's History Month, how about a little trivia?

- More women vote than men.
- Nearly 80% of US election administrators are women.
- 13 states, including Maryland, currently allow same-day voter registration. (Maryland is one of them!)
- Average voter turnout for Presidential elections is 60%.

(courtesy of [LWV.org/blog](https://www.lwv.org/blog))

Forging the county's strategic path to public education pillars

By Kathy Larrabee, Director

In Maryland's 24 school districts, education leaders are scrambling to develop strategic plans that will address priorities and goals to align with Maryland's massive plan to reform public education. The plan, known as The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, is anchored by 2021 state legislation that codified the recommendations of the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education. In short, the Blueprint dictates five distinct goals, known as pillars: early childhood education; high-quality and diverse teachers and leaders; college and career readiness; resources to ensure all students are successful; and governance and accountability. To ensure the Blueprint's success, the Accountability and Implementation Board, an independent unit of state government, will hold state and local governments accountable for planned education outcomes. However, the measure got off to a bumpy start when the pandemic closed schools and government priorities changed. In 2022, the legislature pushed back implementation dates.

Funding the Blueprint was an investment Maryland was willing to make. However, recently, several legislators have hinted that some requirements of the law may need tweaking to make implementation affordable to the school districts. The Commission estimated that implementing the plan would cost an additional

\$4 billion each year over a 10 year period, about \$2.8 billion from the state and \$1.2 billion from local governments. Currently, in Maryland, the public education system is primarily funded by a combination of state and local tax revenues. Nevertheless, planning a way forward continues.

Taking a lead from the Blueprint, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and its Board developed its own strategic plan, incorporating Commission goals, or pillars, upon which all planning and funding decisions will be based. In turn, local school districts must align their planning with the MSDE pillars to ensure all paths lead to the intent of the Blueprint. Under the watchful eye of Superintendent Dr. Mark Bedell, an Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) Strategic Planning Steering Committee is well into a process to support and guide the development of an AACPS plan to implement the Blueprint in accordance with MSDE guidance. The Steering Committee is made up of

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AACPS Superintendent Mark Bedell kicks off each monthly meeting of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee with words of encouragement and challenges to be considered. (photo by K. Larrabee)

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approximately 40 community members with various education interests and ties and several AACPS administrators. Meetings have been open to any AACPS Board of Education members who wish to attend.

Responding to an AACPS invitation to participate on the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, the LWVAAC nominated Board member Kathy Larrabee. She has been a long-time League observer of the AACPS Board of Education and, also, has significant strategic planning experience gained as a public affairs specialist in the federal sector.

To date, the Steering Committee has met four times, expecting its work to be completed by May. Various county high schools have provided excellent academic settings for committee meetings. The host schools' principals have been eager to greet the committee with facts and figures about their schools and to brag on their students. These academic settings have brought home to committee members the importance of the Blueprint and the high-level, coordinated planning meant to improve education opportunities for each K-12 student to reach his or her potential.

A highly experienced consultant with Insight Education Group (IEG) leads the Steering Committee process. IEG has worked similarly

with numerous education systems throughout the nation. Dedicated AACPS staff and a leadership team work separately with the consultant. Together, they have reached numerous stakeholders, including parents/guardians, community members, business/organizational partners, PTAs, and school district employees, through surveys, focus groups, and other means for diverse perspectives on important areas of education as suggested by the Steering Committee.

During a planning session, the IED consultant asked a school administrator, "What keeps you up at night?" She responded, "A second grader who cannot read."

The feedback from stakeholders has validated the committee's initial work, which began by identifying core values—a set of fundamental beliefs to guide the process. Core values presented to stakeholders by the Steering Committee were identified by words like equity, safety, belonging, innovation, integrity, and respect, to name a few.

Building on core values, the Committee and stakeholders began imagining the portrait of a graduate, articulating the characteristics, skills, and competencies essential for the future success of an AACPS graduate. The elements of the portrait presented by the Committee were then ranked in importance by adult and student stakeholders as indicated in the table on the next page.

Thus far, the AACPS strategic planning process has centered on topics the Committee and stakeholders alike can see or sense. But

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Characteristics, Skills, and Competencies Deemed Important for all AACPS Graduates

ADULT STAKEHOLDER RANKING	STUDENT STAKEHOLDER RANKING
#1 Financial literacy and life skills	#1 Ability to acquire new skills and knowledge
#2 Ability to acquire new skills and knowledge	#2 Teamwork, collaboration and relationship-building
#3 Teamwork, collaboration and relationship-building	#3 Creativity and innovation
#4 Strong math and reading skills	#4 Leadership
#5 Critical & strategic global thinking/problem solving	#5 Adaptability
#6 Growth mindset and resilience	#6 Self-awareness and personal well-being
#7 Empathy	#7 Flexibility
#8 Adaptability	#8 Empathy

the late February meeting began with making hard decisions: prioritizing goals and setting measurable strategies. Numerous AACPS administrators joined the Committee round table discussions (organized by priority topics) to lend textual depth to the discussions and to hear new ideas. The content of monthly planning meetings will continue to build until the final plan is ready for prime time. The content of the finished plan will be written and formatted in a suitable style for the entire AACPS community to understand in the hope all will support the journey to a stellar AAC education system that meets the needs of all students.

It is possible the Blueprint's precise outcome statewide may not be fully known until a cohort of students entering pre-kindergarten graduates from high school.#

In League

LWVMD Lobby Night 2024: analysis, strategy, tactics

By Kathy Larrabee, Director

They trickled in one-by-one and in pairs to the back room of the 49 West restaurant in Annapolis to study LWVMD legislative priorities, devise strategies, and hone advocacy talking points. On a Monday afternoon in early March, 38 League members in all came together, representing nine local Maryland Leagues and 20 different legislative districts.

Lobby Night kicked off with a quick review of 12 LWVMD-supported bills that remain stuck in several Senate and House committees. Bill



LWVAAC members and a guest prepare to visit legislative committee offices in the MD Senate and House to lobby on LWVMD's behalf for bills of interest that haven't yet received hearings. (l-r) Guest Ellen Riley, Cindy Barry, Jennifer Zito, Anne Myers, Roxann King and Kathy Larrabee. (photo by B. Carlson)

topics related to fairness with elections, voting, taxes, housing, healthcare and more. LWVMD expects by the end of the 90-day General Assembly session, its League advocates will have provided written and/or oral

testimony on well over 100 bills.

After a short period of fellowship and a light meal, League members left 49 West grouped by their legislative districts. The five LWVAAC members in attendance live in two legislative districts (30A and 31). Member Jenny Zito and her husband, who live in District 31, split off from members Cindy Barry (and a friend), Roxann King, Kathy Larrabee, and Ann Myers, who live in 30A, to make their rounds to legislative offices.

The receptions League members received from legislators and staff can only be described as warm and inviting. In large part, respect for the League is based on its reputation and professionalism in handling advocacy, action, and voting services. In addition to informative discussions on specific bills, including talk about the legislative strategies taking place behind the scenes, several senators and delegates offered unrelated kudos to the League for its work.

League of Women Voters of Maryland 2024 Legislative Priorities

LWVMD is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our members have chosen these issues as our top priorities for 2024.

Making Democracy Work

- Protecting Voting Rights
- Local Election Accountability & Reform
- Enhancing Transparency and Public Access

Social & Economic Justice

- Promoting Affordable Housing
- Equity & Accountability in Education
- Expanding Behavioral Health Services
- Equity in Criminal Justice
- Juvenile Justice Reform

Protecting the Environment

- Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Advancing the Renewable Energy Transition
- Promoting Environmental Justice

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

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LWVAAC members Roxann King, Kathy Larrabee, and Anne Myers (l-r) queried Senator Michael Jackson (D-Dist 27), a member of the Budget and Taxation Cmte, regarding a firearms prevention bill that has not yet received a hearing.

Senator Michael Jackson (D-Dist 27), who serves on the Budget and Taxation Committee, had a story to tell. He served as a delegate from 2015 until 2021 when he was encouraged to run for the Senate. During his campaign, he was invited by the Calvert County LWV to participate in a candidates' forum. He said a forum was a new experience for him, his anxiety level was high. When he experienced the orderly manner in which a League forum is conducted, his mind was at rest.

LWVMD depends heavily upon local League volunteers for the heavy lifting that takes place during the 90-day legislative session. To help out, League members must first volunteer to learn the intricacies of the Maryland General Assembly bill tracking system. Then they choose a team to

work with, each focused on a priority topic. Using the LWV public policy positions that derive from League study and member consensus on the findings, the advocacy teams write testimony. When a legislative committee schedules a bill of interest for a hearing, League advocacy teams write testimony that is presented in writing or in person, or both. Testimony may be favorable or unfavorable, depending upon the League policy position on the bill topic.

The advocacy arm of League work, carried out by local League members, with guidance of the LWVMD leadership, is the essence of being an active member—working to make a difference in Maryland's legislative process. Try it out next session; sign up when LWVMD makes the call for advocates in late 2024. You'll enjoy it. #



LWVAAC members and District 30A constituents Roxann King, Kathy Larrabee and Anne Myers (l-r) take the opportunity to meet informally with Delegate Shaneka Henson (D-Dist 30A) on LWVMD's 2024 Lobby Night.

A Deeper Dive

The ERA saga and why it needs a happy ending

By Kathy Larrabee, Director

According to staunch supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the federal government has sidestepped certification even though 38 states, or a three-fourths majority, have ratified. However, the backstory to this position is complicated. Adding to the confusion, more than 80 percent of men and women in the United States believe they are already guaranteed equal rights under the U.S. Constitution, according to national data.

A recent anniversary of the first ERA legislation (100 years ago) and recent state issues related to reproductive rights have breathed new life into the ERA movement. ERA supporters believe equal rights for all women and men, regardless of sex or gender, should be enshrined in the U.S. Constitution to ensure women have protection against gender-based violence and workplace discrimination and access to reproductive health care, to name a few reasons. People who oppose the ERA amendment are against abortion and what sex equality could mean for women in the military, those embroiled in domestic situations, and for abortion rights, to name a few.

At the core of the ERA controversy over certification is the 1982 deadline extension Congress set for states to ratify the ERA. More than 30 years after that ratification deadline

Nevada, Illinois, and Virginia became the final states needed for full ratification. ERA supporters say the deadline is meaningless because it appears in the ERA Preamble (or proposing clause), not in the ERA Articles. Further complicating matters, five states that had ratified years before passed resolutions to rescind, or revoke, their ratifications. However, there doesn't appear to be a recognized process for rescinding. Close to her death, according to the *Atlantic* magazine, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a longtime cheerleader for women's rights and, in particular, the ERA, told Georgetown Law School students, "I would like to see a new beginning. I'd like it to start over," referring to ERA enabling legislation and the ratification process.

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*LWVAAC
Board
members
Amanda
SubbaRao,
Kathy
Larrabee
and Alexis
Dorsey (l-r)
rally at the
Maryland
State House
in February
to show
support for
legislation
that reaffirms Maryland's commitment to the ERA.*



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As women typically do on issues of equality, thousands nationwide have mobilized to become a unified bloc in favor of certifying the ERA now, arguing that states ratified the ERA based on the Articles, not the Preamble date. These supporters are showing the same persistence of the suffragists more than 100 years ago. In fact, suffragist legend Alice Paul, with a few other activists, drafted the first ERA language in 1923. It was later revised to read: *Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.*

LWVAAC recently joined the national ERA Coalition, along with the LWVMD and LWVUS and approximately 300 other organizations, to help push the ERA across the finish line, one way or another. The LWV believes the root cause of inequality must be addressed by amending the

U.S. Constitution. Even though women have gained the right to vote, they continue to battle systematic discrimination in the form of unequal pay, workplace harassment, pregnancy discrimination, domestic violence, limited access to comprehensive health care, and more. The ERA would elevate the standards by which the courts scrutinize sex-based discrimination, protect against the rollback of rights, and pave the way for further legislative progress towards sex and gender equality.

Recent high court rulings in several states have given ERA supporters new evidence that the ERA as the 28th Amendment is essential to invalidate many state and federal laws that discriminate against women. These state actions, they say, call into question the federal recognition of the power and authority of state legislatures.

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Maryland's Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller excites the crowd with her remarks that urged the Biden administration to publish the federal ERA as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and for the U.S. Congress to affirm. (photo by K. Larrabee)

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Several states, including Maryland, include prohibitions against sex discrimination in their state constitutions. Alabama recently made headlines that prove equal rights for women and men at the state level can be overturned, or repealed, by a higher court—and even for primarily religious reasons as stated in the courts' opinions and several justices' individual opinions. The Alabama Supreme Court has ruled that all frozen IVF embryos must be treated as living children, with severe repercussions for those seeking fertility treatment in the state. The Alabama Governor soon intervened after IVF clinics shut down in response to the ruling and innocent patients were left in limbo.

A Capitol Hill coalition of representatives recently introduced legislation to remove any date from



Kate Campbell Stevenson, a League acquaintance who serves on the board of Baltimore's Women's Heritage Center & Museum, advocates for women who spark change.

the ERA amendment. Rallies to support the legislation have been well attended by members of our nation's most notable women's rights groups, including a young cohort of highly-spirited women who want to make their own reproductive and gender-related decisions. For additional support for the cause, the Hill



MD Senate President Bill Ferguson speaks of Maryland's longtime support for the ERA, noting that Maryland was one of the first states to ratify in 1972.

coalition has asked ERA ratifying states to pass legislation now to reaffirm their commitments to having an ERA enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. In Maryland, the Women's Legislative Caucus sponsored SJ1, a joint resolution to reaffirm Maryland's ratification of the ERA to be shared with Congress.

The Maryland's Women's Legislative Caucus recently held a rally at the Maryland state house in support of SJ1. Maryland's Lt. Governor Aruna Miller and Maryland Senate President Bill Ferguson were among high-level speakers who touted the validity of the ratified ERA and the importance of the reaffirming legislation as a signal to Congress to act on the ERA. Rally supporters represented national, state, and local organizations with an array of pro ERA

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posters and banners. Several LWVAAC members joined the rally to show support for the ERA and Maryland's stance. Justice Ginsburg had it right, the ERA situation is messy. But history has shown us that the persistence and power of women, especially when they hold power, must never be underestimated. #

ERA advocates nationwide are fed up AND fired up

By Susan Crawford

On the 100-year anniversary of the ERA's introduction in the House of Representatives, members of a number of organizations from across the country joined National ERA Coalition Leaders at Lafayette Square in Washington, DC, and marched down Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the U.S. Capitol. Along the way, they stopped at the U.S. Justice Department and at the National Archives to make their voices heard for certification of the ERA as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Enroute, the marchers chanted, "It has been 100 years – not one more!"

Representatives Cori Bush (MO), Ayanna Pressley (MA) and Jennifer McClellan (VA) joined the marchers at the National Archives. Congresswoman Bush gave a passionate speech that highlighted the work of women of color in the fight for equality and urging her fellow members of Congress to affirm the ERA.

LWVAAC member Susan Crawford, who also serves as program chair for the AA County Branch of the Association of American University Women (AAUW), joined with LWWUS leaders and staff at the Capitol press conference. Speakers included: LWWUS CEO Virginia Kase Solomón; AAUW CEO Gloria L. Blackwell; former Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), who now chairs the ERA Coalition Board; former Congresswomen (D-NY) Eleanor Smeal, Co-founder and President of The Feminist Majority Foundation; Shalina Effendi, an organizer with Generation Ratify; and YWCA USA CEO Margaret Mitchell. They urged Congress to pass pending joint resolutions affirming the ERA and withdraw the arbitrary time limit set for ratification when Congress passed the ERA in 1972. #



LWVAAC member Susan Crawford (left) joins LWWUS ERA advocates at the U.S. Capitol calling for ERA certification.