

THE VOTER

A Quarterly Newsletter of the LWVAAC

Summer 2025, Issue 137

Fall Calendar

Voter Registration Distributor Training (virtual)

Tue, Aug 19, 12:30 p.m.

lwvaacmd.org/25vr_training

LWVAAC Board Meeting (virtual)*

Tue, Aug 19, 4:30 p.m.

LWVAAC Fall Welcome Back

Sat, Sep 13, 2:00 p.m.

Odenton Library, 1325 Annapolis Road, Odenton

lwvaacmd.org/25welcomeback

National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) and Annapolis Primary Election

Tue, Sep 16

LWVMD Fall Workshop (virtual)

Sat, Sep 27, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

lwvmd.org/fallworkshop2025

Annapolis Mayoral Candidate Forum

Tue, Sep 30, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Congregation Kneseth Israel, 1125 Spa Rd,
Annapolis

LWVAAC Discuss & Decide: Local Control of Education Study (virtual)

Date and time TBD

https://www.lwvaacmd.org/25local_control_ed

Annapolis General Election

Tue, Nov 4

LWVAAC Holiday Breakfast & Charity Drive

Sat, Dec 6, 9 a.m.

Light House Bistro, 202 West Street, Annapolis

*Dates and times of subsequent LWVAAC Board meetings will be determined at the 8/19/25 meeting and posted on the [LWVAAC online calendar](#).

LWVAAC Online

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Join/Renew: www.lwvaacmd.org/join2

Donate: lwvaacmd.org/efdonation

Voter Toolkit: lwvaacmd.org/voter_toolkit

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President's Message

Dear members and friends,

It's been a real honor to have served as LWVAAC's president these past two years. As I mentioned at our Annual Meeting, our League has done an amazing amount of work during this past year educating and supporting voters, and I continue to be in awe of all the time and effort our board and volunteers have put into our mission. As we transition to a governing board, I know things will be in excellent hands.

One of the things that drew me to the League was the grassroots nature of the organization and the focus on local community. The League strives to build a stronger community by helping friends and neighbors understand the importance of an informed voice, and providing accurate and factual information around voting and the important issues facing us. As challenges to our basic rights increase, our work is more important than ever. When we encourage Anne Arundel residents to have a voice in their government at all levels, we are defending democracy not only in our community, but everywhere. And with modern communication tools, many local voter education efforts can easily reach an even broader audience.

Participants at our July 10 retreat began the process of planning the events, advocacy initiatives and voter service activities that our League will undertake this year. Please help your Board make these plans a reality. Join a League committee, team or the Observer Corps. Volunteer at voter services events. [Attend Board](#)

[meetings](#) and share your thoughts, concerns and wishes. There are many challenges ahead, but **together** we will rise and meet them.

Thank you again for your support for the League, for your community, for rights, and for democracy.

~ Amanda



Amanda SubbaRao

Annapolis

Jenna Bruxvoort
Michele Coxander
Sally Garrett
Christy Hollywood
Janice John
Robin Kime
Deb Light
Laura Palmer
Ellen Sloan



Chester

Sarah Callanan

Crofton

Angela McWhirter

Edgewater

Kristin Meyers

Millersville

Karen Agee

Severna Park

Shannon McKelvey

Member Spotlight

Faces of our League

Will Andrione

What prompted you to join the League?

I joined the league around the time of the 2024 General election because Dr. Ashworth (AACPS), someone who I've known and worked with in the past, let me know about the opportunity to help moderate a candidates forum for the League. I had heard about the League prior, but hadn't joined because I felt I didn't fit the name. However, working with people from the League on the Board of Education Candidates forum and talking and engaging with them made it clear to me that this organization was something great that I wanted to be a part of.



Member since October 2024

What civics issues do you care most about?

The civics issue I care most about is youth enfranchisement and advocacy. The youth are an essential facet of life, and despite that fact, they are not enfranchised even though they can be registered to vote at 16 years of age. As a result of this, the youth don't feel inclined to become civically engaged and don't fight for issues they believe in. I think that if we want to put more emphasis on the issues we all believe in, we can accomplish that by giving the youth motivation to be involved.

What school or college do you currently attend? Briefly share your career goals and aspirations.

I am a rising senior at Severna Park High School. I will be applying to colleges in the fall where I hope to be accepted, and attend a college in the northeast to study Political Science/Public Policy. Outside of school, I serve as the State Legislative Affairs Coordinator for the Maryland Association of Student Councils and the Secretary of Legislation for the Chesapeake Regional Association of Student Councils, where I build a bridge connecting the youth with their representatives and issues that matter to them.

What might other members be interested in knowing about you?

I am a HUGE history buff. In 4th grade, after reading the biography of JFK, I wanted to learn more about him. In my quest to learn more, I ventured down a YouTube rabbit hole where I came across a clip of Walter Cronkite announcing JFK's death. I was so impressed with that that for Halloween I dressed up as Walter Cronkite. From that, to dressing up as George Washington and running around Williamsburg, to having a bookshelf stocked to the brim with history books – history has been my passion and foundation for years. #

League Activities



Voter Registration Distributor (VRD) Training

The first step in empowering **voters** is ensuring they are properly registered.
The key to empowering **volunteers** is training!

On Tuesday, August 19, Nicole Hill of the Anne Arundel County Board of Elections will lead a virtual training session for volunteer voter registration distributors (VRDs), explaining Maryland's voter registration process in detail and answering frequently asked questions. Participants will not only be prepared to register voters themselves, they'll have the knowledge and confidence to mentor others, building LWVAAC's capacity for voter service.

Community organizations regularly look to our League for help with voter registration and education. Please plan to attend and become a valued member of LWVAAC's Voter Services team. Questions? Contact Vera at votersvc@lwvaacmd.org.

Tuesday, August 19 at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom; all are welcome. [Register here](#)

Coming this Fall

Discuss & Decide: LWVMD Local Control of Education Study

Adopted at 2023 State Convention, this statewide study considers whether to update the existing LWVMD position on local control of education in terms of funding. LWVAAC will hold a consensus meeting prior to October 17, 2025. Please review the materials and plan to attend!

Fact Sheet and background: https://www.lwvaacmd.org/25local_control_ed

Contact: Amanda SubbaRao asubbarao@lwvmd.org

Fall Welcome Back

Topic: *Anne Arundel County's Multicultural Communities*

When: Saturday, September 13 at 2 p.m.

Where: Odenton Regional Library, 1325 Annapolis Road, Odenton 21113

Speaker: Alison Flores, Anne Arundel County Office of Multicultural Affairs

Webpage: lwvaacmd.org/25welcomeback

Refreshments will be served. \$10/person.

All are welcome! Questions? Please contact Abby at action@lwvaacmd.org



LWVAAC adopts engagement and advocacy initiatives at annual retreat

By Niecy Chambers, Secretary

Each summer, our League holds a retreat for the purpose of planning the coming year's activities. The annual gathering is open to anyone interested in sharing ideas or helping execute them. This year's event took place July 10 at the Edgewater Glory Days Grill, a convenient alternative that allowed participants to socialize and brainstorm in a private room while enjoying a light meal and excellent service.

Engagement initiatives were a focus of the 2025 retreat. With the goal of strengthening members' connection with the League, a new Monthly Member Meeting (3M) Committee was formed, under the leadership of Delia Scott. The committee is charged with investigating options for LWVAAC to hold regular monthly meetings, same day, time and venue. Meetings would address a topic of interest and feature a speaker

or presentation. Although oriented toward LWV members and issues, meetings would be open to the public.

To succeed, the 3M Committee needs input and participation from members who don't serve on the LWVAAC Board. Please contact Delia at program@lwvaacmd.org if you'd like to help get this initiative off the ground.

Retreat participants also supported pursuing new education and advocacy initiatives (see p. 6) and undertaking the other events described in this newsletter. Future plans include a legislative reception for the Anne Arundel County delegation in the General Assembly. Contact Abby at action@lwvaacmd.org to volunteer for the planning committee.

Opportunities to participate in the League's work are many and varied. The LWVAAC Board relies on members' engagement, not just during retreat but all year long. Please reach out and volunteer if you can. Thank you! #

Click [here](#) to read notes from the July 10 retreat.

Call to Action: LWV democracy initiatives

By Alexis Dorsey, Vice President

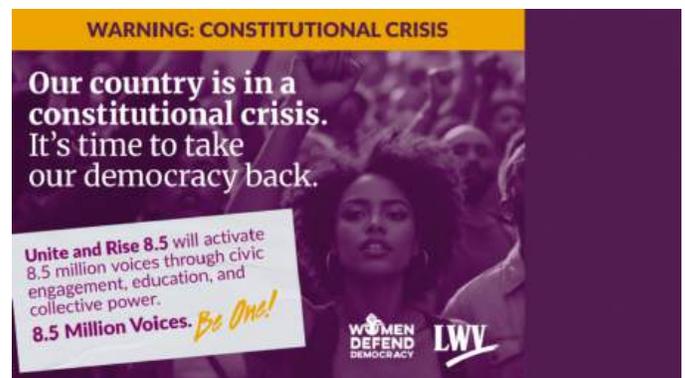
This is a challenging time to be a League member. Since the LWVUS declared that our nation is in a constitutional crisis, members throughout the country have been exploring ways to defend democracy and engage voters. LWVAAC is determined to be part of this fight and is focusing on two programs: Stand Up for Democracy and Unite & Rise 8.5. Now is the time for action. Will you answer the call?

Stand Up for Democracy is a nonpartisan public education initiative developed by LWV of Sonoma County and publicly available at lwvsonoma.org. The campaign's purpose is to foster a better understanding of the Constitution, how government works and other important civics topics.

Information is presented in ad form and covers topics such as the First Amendment, the Bill of Rights, due process, and others. Each ad contains a question such as "What is Due Process?" and a QR Code that links to nonpartisan landing pages giving details of the topic mentioned, why the topic matters and links to learn more. The LWV of Sonoma County was able to feature their messages on the back of transit buses and in a digital media campaign.

We are working to determine how to share these messages with community partners in AA County and need your help. Opportunities include public libraries, public schools, NAACP, AAUW, ACT, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and possibly the Board of Elections. If you are interested in promoting civic education by bringing this exciting campaign to this area, contact Alexis Dorsey at vp@lwvaacmd.org.

Unite & Rise 8.5 is an initiative launched by LWVUS in May which aims to mobilize 8.5 million voters to preserve and protect our democracy. The number 8.5 is the estimated number of voters it would take to bring about change through nonviolent protest. This is based on the finding from the Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights: "Nonviolent protests are twice as likely to succeed as armed conflicts . . . and those engaging a threshold of 3.5% of the population have never failed to bring about change."



This initiative uses a multifaceted approach involving legal challenges, mobilization and coalition building, and civic education and engagement. Members are encouraged to lobby in opposition to the SAVE Act by contacting elected officials, penning Letters to the Editor, and posting on social media. Other actions to consider include: organizing a rally or hosting a community conversation about the impact of immigration in your community. Finally, members are asked to identify organizations with a common interest that will co-lead actions. Click [here](#) for the Unite & Rise 8.5 toolkit.

Are you ready to unite and rise? Take the first step by signing the [Unite & Rise Commitment Pledge](#).



Governor Moore was a highlight of LWVMD's well-attended *Make Democracy Work* breakfast in April. LWVAAC members at the event included (l-r) Marg Duffy, Yolande Dickerson, Hannah Collins, Abby Root, Amanda SubbaRao, Alexis Dorsey, Anne Myers, Vera Herath and Alfa Stevens.



AACC adjunct faculty and LWVAAC member Cynthia Barry (not shown) facilitated a respectful and informed discussion of Maria Ressa's *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* at the May Books for Learning meeting.

(right) Scenes from LWVAAC's Annual Membership Meeting, held May 1 at Cafe Mezzanotte in Severna Park. Guest speaker Jared DeMarinis, Administrator of the State Board of Elections, spoke about the power of elections to effect change and strategies to increase voter participation, especially among youth.



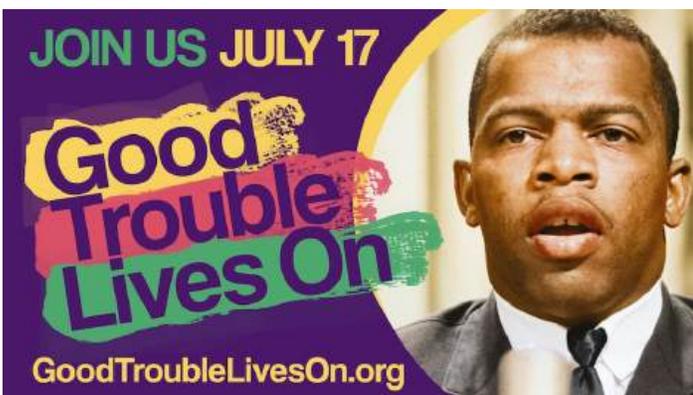
Action and Advocacy

LWVAAC Gets into Good Trouble

By Alfa Stevens, Editor

On July 17, five years since the passing of prominent civil rights leader and former Congressman, John R. Lewis, communities across the country, including Annapolis, took to the streets to honor his legacy and continue the fight for civil rights and social justice. Lewis represented Georgia's 5th District from 1987 until his death on July 17, 2020, at age 80. He stood alongside then-President Lyndon Johnson as he signed the original Voting Rights Act into law in August, 1965. Throughout his life and his career in Congress, John Lewis devoted himself to the fundamental promise of this nation: the right to vote.

Designated "Good Trouble Lives On Day of Action," July 17, 2025 was a national day of peaceful rallies and marches protesting the Trump administration's violations of civil and human rights. The Annapolis event was



sponsored by Standing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (SURJ3A), one of the organizations leading the rally efforts. The event started with marches from different points in Annapolis, intended to evoke memories of voting rights advocates crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge, before ending up at the State House steps for a rally where hundreds of protesters came together to "make good trouble" on Lawyer's Mall. Among the hundreds were League members Karen Agee, Alexis Dorsey, Vicki Jordan, Alfa Stevens, and her great-granddaughter, Harlei, Leaguer-in-Training.

Several social justice advocates and local elected officials addressed the crowd about the impacts of the Trump administration policies and executive orders. They also spoke of threats they said Marylanders face because of the administration and its policies.

Longtime Anne Arundel County civil rights activist, Carl Snowden, invited all legislators present and all youth under 17 years of age to come to the stage. He recognized the youth as "our future" and told the crowd that we are a part of what John Lewis once dreamed of, "we're a part of history."

One of the legislative staffers spoke with conviction, "We must continue to believe that we can make the change we want to see, that the pendulum will swing back towards equality, freedom and the ideals we hold dear."

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In the words of the former Congressman, “Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and help redeem the soul of America.” The power lies with the people. Good trouble lives on! #

Council Cuts Allocation for Public Campaign Financing

By Abby Root, Action Chair

The League of Women Voters has had a position in support of public campaign financing for over 50 years. When the Anne Arundel County Council failed to pass a resolution to put public campaign financing on the ballot as a charter amendment in 2022, LWVAAC took action. The League engaged in a public information campaign and unsuccessful petition drive prior to that year’s general election; the following year, we [testified](#) before County Council in favor of Bill 25-23 establishing a public campaign financing fund for candidates running for County Executive or County Council.

County Council passed the legislation in June 2023. Council members Smith, Pickard, Hummer and Rodvien voted in favor while Council members Nathan Volke, Amanda Fiedler and Shannon Leadbetter voted against.

In conjunction with the public campaign financing fund, the bill



Protesters hold signs during the “Good Trouble Lives On” July 17th rally in Annapolis. (Photos by Stevens and Ray)

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created a Public Campaign Finance System Commission to estimate the funds necessary to implement the system and recommend a budget appropriation. Commissioners are appointed from each Councilmanic district and by the County Executive.

In 2026, Anne Arundel voters will elect a new County Executive and County Council, providing the first opportunity since the campaign finance fund was established for candidates to qualify to receive public funding.

Council approved an initial allocation of \$1 million to the fund in 2024. The bipartisan Public Campaign Finance System Commission recommended \$1.5 million be added to the fund this year. County Executive Pittman approved the amount and included it in the county's Fiscal Year 2026 budget.

At the June 9 budget meeting, Council members Nathan Volke, Amanda Fiedler and Shannon Leadbetter moved an amendment to reduce the \$1.5 million allocation to \$250,000, and spend the budgeted \$1.25 million elsewhere "during a budget season when state and federal funding is in flux."

Councilmember Volke, who represents District 3, noted that the deadline to file for the next election is February 24, 2026.

"That means that by the time we come to [the] next budget cycle, we will know exactly who the universe of candidates are that are running for County Executive and County Council," Volke explained. "We will be able to extrapolate from that, using pretty simple math, do we have enough money or not?"

Councilmember Julie Hummer, cast the deciding vote for the amendment. Hummer, a self-proclaimed "huge supporter" of public campaign financing, offered two reasons for supporting the amendment. She said the County was late in publicizing the public campaign finance system, noting that several candidates had already begun fundraising campaigns that could make them ineligible. In addition, Hummer said "I simply, in this economic climate, was not comfortable having \$2 million sitting in an account that we can't touch in any way if it's not used." She said the council intends to allocate \$1.25 million, plus savings from other cuts, to buy new patrol cars, pay for library internships, and provide additional special education positions and certified guidance counselors to the school system.

The reduction in allocation leaves \$1.25 million in the fund. Hummer said she's working on legislation that would allow lawmakers to add to the public campaign financing system as needed.

Critics expressed concern over ad hoc allocations. "Instead of having a democratizing effect, this reduced allocation of \$250K makes the fund beholden to political forces, which undermines it," wrote Rebecca Forte, a member of the bipartisan Public Campaign Financing System Commission, in a letter announcing her resignation.

The public campaign financing program matches funds up to \$750,000 for county executive candidates and \$125,000 for county council candidates. "Considering that Anne Arundel County has 7 county council seats and 1 county

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executive seat, this sets up the fund to fail at its intended purpose with less than one person utilizing the fund per race,” Forte added. #

[Source: Alex Mann, *The Baltimore Banner*, 6/12/25]

Affordable housing in the news: Councilmember Smith introduces Tiny Home bill

By Abby Root, Action Chair

Bill 48-25, an Ordinance concerning: Subdivision and Development – Zoning – Tiny Home Community Development, was introduced by Councilmember Pete Smith (District 1) on May 5, 2025. The legislation would permit the planning, construction, and occupancy of THD (Tiny Home Development) in accordance with standards for tiny houses; encourage affordable housing options through lower construction, maintenance and utility costs; allow for innovative housing options compatible with existing neighborhoods; and promote energy conservation and efficient use of the county’s infrastructure.

At a meeting with Anne Arundel Connecting Together (ACT) prior to the June 2 public hearing on Bill 48-25, Councilmember Smith indicated that the bill would not be voted on at the first hearing because he anticipated amendments to be added to it. Wanting to hear more discussions first, LWVAAC did not sign on to testify at the June 2 hearing. The plan was to testify in favor of the bill at the 2nd hearing. However, the public hearings closed after the first hearing. At the June 16 Council meeting, Councilmember Smith moved to postpone the vote until the following meeting. He subsequently withdrew the bill and

stated his intention to introduce a revised version at the next Council meeting, which will be on September 2 after the summer break.

The League will continue to watch this bill. Its stated purpose aligns with LWVAAC’s Planning and Zoning position to “promote and pursue balanced development in appropriate target areas that will have minimum impact on the environment and maximum long-term benefit to employment and the tax base including provision of opportunity for affordable housing ...”.

Although LWVAAC supports THD for Anne Arundel County, we are concerned that Bill 48-25 does not require the THD communities to be built near public transit. We hope to see that addressed as the bill moves forward. Read our written testimony [here](#). #



Example of a tiny home. (Photo by [Wald Creations on Unsplash](#))

Voter Services

Service through the seasons

By Vera Herath, Voter Services Co-chair

Spring, summer and fall, the Voter Services (VS) team stays active and in the public eye, providing election information, planning forums and training volunteers.

In March, we hosted a table at the 10th Annual Women's Empowerment Forum, sponsored by The Links, Inc., Annapolis Chapter. We also participated in the Youth Connections Mini Conference, put on by the Annapolis Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (AACDST), where VS Co-chairs Herath and Jordan hosted a table and gave a presentation entitled, "The Importance of Civic Engagement."



VS Co-chair Vicki Jordan joins NAACP volunteers at the Juneteenth Festival on June 21.



VS Co-chairs Vicki Jordan and Vera Herath at AACDST Youth Connections Mini Conference.

This May, two new members joined VS Co-chair Vera Herath and VP Alexis Dorsey at the Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) "Hive Five" end-of-year celebration, where they spoke with students and offered voting information.

In June, our volunteers worked with the NAACP-AAC at the MLK, Jr. Festival in Annapolis and the Juneteenth Celebration held at the County Fairgrounds in Crownsville.

The Annapolis Pride parade and festival, originally scheduled for May 31, was postponed due to bad weather. The new date is October 18, so *please mark your calendars and sign up to help!*

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The VS team was well represented and our service publicly acknowledged at the 18th annual Fourth of July Naturalization Ceremony at William Paca House in Annapolis. USCIS swore in 20 new citizens from 17 countries this year. After administering the oath, the USCIS representative told the new citizens they were eligible to vote and urged them to stop by the League table to register. Volunteers Sally Garrett, Maryann Gosnell, Kathy Lottenbach and Vera Herath were prepared! They collected 12 completed applications and provided several new citizens forms to submit from home.

Our next major activities are National Night Out at Busch Annapolis Library on August 5 and our virtual Voter Registration Distributor training on August 19 (see p. 4). Looking a little further ahead, we will have National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) on September 16, and we intend to work with Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) to run another successful high school voter registration program in the fall. Stay tuned for details and opportunities to volunteer!

As noted in the last newsletter, City of Annapolis voters will elect a Mayor and an Alderperson to represent their ward this fall. The Primary will be



VS volunteers Sally Garrett, Maryann Gosnell, Vera Herath and Kathy Lottenbach greeted candidates for citizenship as they arrived for the Naturalization Ceremony at Paca House on July 4 and offered the new citizens the opportunity to register when they exited. (photos by J. Chambers)

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held on September 16, and the General Election on November 4. At time of publication, several Primary races are uncontested. Two Democrats are vying for Mayor and one Republican has entered the Mayoral race. No Republican candidates have filed yet for any of the Aldermanic offices. The filing deadline is July 28.

A candidate forum committee, comprised of Junior League of Annapolis (JLA), AACDST, and LWVAAC members, met in March to begin planning for a mayoral candidate forum to be held prior to the General Election. Date, venue, moderator, and videographer have all been secured. The committee will meet next on August 14, after the filing deadline. Email Vicki if you'd like to help.

As always, we welcome volunteers, new voter service opportunities, fresh ideas. Please join us! Email Vera or Vicki at votersvc@lwvaacmd.org today! #

This July, Nonprofit VOTE published a guide to conducting voter registration drives in each of the 50 states. Click [here](#) to download information for Maryland.

CONDUCTING A VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE IN MARYLAND

Fair Elections Center
Nonprofit VOTE

VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINES

- Applications must be received or postmarked by 21 days before Election Day or the applicant will have to register during early voting or in person on Election Day.
 - Drives must return completed forms to the appropriate board within five days of completion or by the voter registration deadline, whichever comes first.

GETTING STARTED

Training Requirement: The state administration and local election directors must offer training. Training is required if the person is a voter registration application (VRA) Distributor who wants to obtain more than 25 state voter registration applications (VRAs) per day. A VRA Distributor is an individual who conducts the following voter registration activities:

- Offering Statewide VRAs to individuals interested in registering to vote or updating an existing registration;
- Assisting people with filling out Statewide VRAs; and Returning completed Statewide VRAs to the appropriate local board office.

Contact your local county election office to get trained: elections.maryland.gov/about/county_boards

Notification and Registration Requirements: Volunteers / staff are required to present their Certificate of Instruction to obtain more than 25 Statewide Voter Registration Applications per day.

Compensation Restrictions: It is illegal in Maryland for a voter registration volunteer or any individual assisting another person to register to vote to receive any form of compensation, including bonuses, that is based on the number of voter registration applications collected. Do not offer an applicant any incentive of monetary value to register to vote.

Voter Registration Volunteer / Staff Restrictions: Volunteers / staff must be at least 18 years old on or before the next general election. VRA distributors must inform the applicant that the applicant can return the registration application to the local board, or the volunteer / staff person can do it.

Fair Elections Center, its Campus Vote Project, and Nonprofit VOTE intend the information contained herein to be used only as a general guide. This document should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a licensed Maryland legal professional.

Last updated May 2025

OBTAINING APPLICATIONS

State Form: Voter registration volunteers are required to present their Certificate of Instruction to the state Board of Elections or the county Board of Elections to receive more than 25 Statewide Voter Registration Applications per day. The forms are also available online at the Board of Elections website: bit.ly/3Zrk9Ug

Federal Form: The federal mail-in voter registration application may be used in voter registration drives: eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form

Photocopying Blank Forms: There are no restrictions against photocopying blank applications for use in registration drives.

HANDLING APPLICATIONS

Incomplete Applications: There is no law or rule prohibiting a voter registration drive volunteer or organizer from filling in missing information on an application. Fair Elections Center does not recommend making corrections to applications or adding missing information without the express consent of the applicant, who is attesting to the truth of the information in the application.

Photocopying Completed Applications / Collecting Information: Under Maryland law, an applicant's driver's license number, state ID number, Social Security Number, and other information from a voter registration application that is protected from public disclosure may not be copied or collected.

Submitting Completed Applications: VRA Distributors must deliver completed VRAs to the appropriate local board within five days of receipt or by the next voter registration deadline, whichever is earlier.

FOR MORE NONPARTISAN VOTER ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES, VISIT OUR RESOURCE LIBRARY
nonprofitvote.org/resource-library



In League

LWVMD CONVENTION 2025

By Abby Root, Action Chair

This year's League of Women Voters of Maryland Biennial Convention was hosted by LWV Queen Anne's County at the beautiful Hyatt Place Kent Narrows on June 8-9, 2025.

Christopher M. Corchiarino, President of the Board of Queen Anne's County Commissioners gave the welcoming address.

LWVAAC was represented by delegates Abby Root and Dona Sauerburger, Vicki Jordan, and Amanda SubbaRao in her capacity as a Director on the State League Board.

The business of this year's biennial convention included election of the 2025-2027 LWVMD Board, adoption of the proposed LWVMD Program, the 2025-2026 budget, and bylaws amendments. The items to be voted on were presented on the first day of the convention and after consideration by the delegates, they were voted on and approved on the second day.

While the amended bylaws were adopted, they were not without discussion. Some members were not clear on one sentence in the LWVUS directive on the definition of voting members. It was agreed that the Chair of the Bylaws Committee would take up this concern with LWVUS, for consideration at the next biennial convention.

Member interest, recent legislative activity, and the length of time since the League had studied housing influenced the decision to adopt the recommended study on housing for program

year 2025-2027. During the program planning process in January/February, several local Leagues expressed interest in studying housing.

Gail Sunderman (LWV Baltimore City), Chair of the LWVMD Study Committee on Local Control of Education, presented findings from the recently completed study. The study was adopted at the 2023 state convention to address the question, "what is meant by 'local control' when it comes to financing education?" The study committee researched the issue and prepared a fact sheet, with a proposal to amend the existing LWVMD position. To amend the



Gail Sunderman presents findings of the study on local control of education. (photo courtesy of LWVMD)

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position, there must be consensus from members statewide, which happens through local consensus meetings. (see p. 4 for fact sheet and LWVAAC consensus information.)

In addition to State League business, we heard from guest speaker, Gwen Stembridge, Associate Director of Nonprofit VOTE, who spoke on *Voter Engagement for Today* and shared how nonprofits can integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services. Elyssa Feder, Executive Director of Rising Organizers was the banquet speaker. Her topic, *Engaging Outside the Ballot Box*, addressed ways to cultivate an informed, active, and resilient democracy. She talked about empowering individuals to organize their communities, advocate for justice, and strengthen grassroots movements.

A segment of the convention agenda entitled *We Are Made For This Moment*, featured two informative workshops.

- Nikki Tyree, LWVMD Executive Director, hosted *Pushing Back (Safely)* and discussed how to engage safely in public activities in your local area, whether leading or collaborating in local rallies, organizing your own town halls, or monitoring and testifying on local priorities.
- Linda Kohn, LWVMD President and Vicki Jordan, LWVAAC Voter Services Co-chair presented *From Voter Registration to Voter Education*. This session discussed how to build stronger activities around voter education. Two-thirds of Maryland voters register through the MVA, online or via another state agency; almost 20% register at same-day registration elections. How can the League push out its voter education activities? What gets in the way?

I'm happy to report that the convention was not strictly business. Participants were treated to a pleasant lunch by the Bay, a beautiful Sunday night dinner and, as always, we enjoyed connecting and sharing ideas.

I encourage you to take the opportunity to attend an LWVMD event. Engaging with other State League members and learning about why they joined the League and the various roles and responsibilities they've assumed since joining is always inspiring. #



Liz Hammond, President of LWV Queen Anne's County, host of the 2025 State Convention, and Linda Kohn, LWVMD President (photo courtesy of LWVMD)

Can the President do that?

In an informative video hosted by the LWV of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Law School Professor Alan Rozenshtein breaks down the ways our federalist system balances power and how we can use state and local authority to safeguard an inclusive democracy.

YouTube link: https://youtu.be/gpFII_F2stk

A Deeper Dive

Using empathy to empower your advocacy

By Dona Sauerburger

I'm a passionate advocate for justice who often feels the call for action. For example, as an orientation and mobility specialist for the blind, I felt alarmed recently when I learned that the national funding for state programs to support deaf-blind children in their schools had been eliminated, and when a proposal was announced to roll back the Federal regulations that made our communities accessible for people with disabilities.

This alarm is not new nor one-sided. For as long as I can remember, conservatives, liberals and everyone in between have felt alarm, anger, fear, and alienation at actions they consider unjust. This sense of alarm and divisiveness seems to have grown in the last decade.

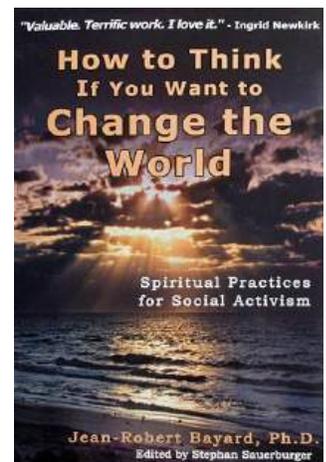
The League prides itself on being unbiased and nonpartisan, but, as individuals advocating for policies and beliefs we hold dear, we may feel alarm, and struggle to understand "the other side."

I'd like to share two strategies to deal with these feelings. I hope these strategies help you as they have helped me to remain calm when I learn about injustices and fight them. The first strategy comes from my mother, Dr. Jean-Robert Bayard, who wrote *How to Think If You Want to Change the World: Spiritual Practices for Social Activism*. The second comes from [Braver Angels](#).

STRATEGY #1: Let "us" include everyone so there is no "them."

This strategy of thinking everyone is on "my team" (whether they know it or not!) is the most powerful thing I've done to restore a feeling of well-being, as well as make me a more effective advocate. It is the reason that I can feel at peace while doing what I can to fight the injustices.

It isn't easy -- humans are hard-wired to form "tribes" and to distrust "them," and trust and feel generous to "us." This makes it very hard to work together and get anything done. However, we often change who we consider to be "us" and who is "them," for example when we discover that we share a common bond with someone who we thought was "them."



So you can consciously make an effort to expand whom you consider to be "us" until you realize that everyone is part of "us." When I managed to do this, I was surprised at how calm I felt when hearing things that used to make me crazy-angry, like eliminating federal funding for deaf-blind children and accessibility regulations.

But, you ask, how can I consider myself to be "us" with someone whom I believe to be evil, greedy, or cruel? Dr. Bayard offers a strategy. To illustrate the steps, I'll use an example from my

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advocacy with administrators of a rehab program for eating disorders who refused to admit my son Stephan because he was a vegan. I'm convinced that Stephan would be alive today if he'd received treatment. Here is the process:

1) Whenever you are dealing with someone who you think is bad, identify what they are doing that is harmful, and search for a time when you did something similar.

If you can't think of anything specific, look for something general, like when you (or "your side") behaved in a way that was greedy, careless, or just thoughtless.

In the example of my advocacy with the rehab administrators who had excluded my son from their program, I remembered something similar I'd done in the past, something I'm very ashamed about. As a student doing my practicum at a camp for blind children, I scorned a blind child with cognitive disabilities whose parents had tried to get her into the program.



Dona protests the 2017 Muslim ban.

2) Ask yourself: Why did I do that?

In this case, my instructors - people I looked up to - said this student didn't belong there. Also, I didn't feel confident teaching blind kids, much less a blind child with a cognitive disability.

Looking at my own unjust, ignorant rejection of someone in need helped me understand the administrators who rejected Stephan. It's likely that they also had someone they looked up to or maybe a standard of care that asserted that vegans could not benefit from these rehab programs. AND perhaps, like me, they didn't feel confident in their ability to serve vegans.

3) Ask yourself: What would make me behave differently?

Well, I wouldn't have done what I did if I had been more confident about my ability to teach this child, AND had more confidence in myself as a professional to know that my instructors' actions were inappropriate and unjust.

This insight helps me understand that maybe if the rehab administrators could feel more confident about how to care for vegan anorexics, they would welcome vegans into their program.

4) Most importantly, realize that you, and the people you're dealing with, are all good people.

Using this strategy enables me to advocate with love and understanding, while feeling at peace as I do everything in my power to make a difference.

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STRATEGY #2: Open yourself to understand and be understood by the “other.”

If there is one thing I treasure in my advocacy, it is the premise of Braver Angels to understand “others,” and realize that until a person or group feels heard, they will not be ready to listen.

My disability colleagues from another state demonstrated the value of listening, empathy and collaboration. Several years ago, when their state slashed funds for all programs, these colleagues were the only ones to acknowledge the state’s need to balance their budget and offer to help. This may be why they were the only ones to get the funding they requested. Understanding and responding to the concerns of others can put you on the same team.

Do other advocates use these strategies of trying to understand “others” and consider them part of our team?

Yes! Dr. Bayard’s book quotes dozens of activists who follow these same principles. But League members need look no further than our May 2025 reading selection, *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* by journalist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa. To be successful, Ressa wrote “You have to create a team, strengthen your area of influence” while “believing in the good.” “Avoid thinking of ‘us’ vs. ‘them’”. Stand in someone else’s shoes.” (p. 261)

For a free copy of Dr. Bayard’s book or to arrange workshops, [click here](#). To learn more about Braver Angels workshops, [click here](#). #



Community News



Join the Friends of Crownsville Hospital Patient Cemetery, Anne Arundel County, and the State of Maryland for a powerful and long-awaited moment of remembrance as we unveil the Say My Name Memorial—a permanent tribute to the more than 1,700 individuals who lived and died at Crownsville State Hospital, many of whom, were laid to rest in unmarked graves.

When: Thursday, September 4, 2025, 11:00 AM

Where: Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park Cemetery, Crownsville

Contact: cecs@aacounty.org; 410-222-1785

[RSVP Here](#)

Parking at the cemetery will not be permitted. Guests can park at the Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds starting at 10 a.m., and shuttle service will be available until the program starts at 11 a.m.

The memorial, inscribed with the names of those once identified only by numbers, stands as a solemn recognition of their humanity, their dignity, and their rightful place in our collective memory. This project restores the identities of those buried in the Crownsville cemetery between 1912 and 1965 during an era of Jim Crow segregation and neglect.