

2025 Annual Membership Meeting



AGENDA

5:00 p.m. Registration

5:10 p.m. Business Meeting

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Welcome | Amanda SubbaRao, President |
| President’s Report | Amanda SubbaRao |
| Highlights of 2024 Annual Meeting | Joyce Martin, Secretary |
| Adoption of Program Recommendation | Abby Root, Action Chair |
| Bylaws Committee Report | Alexis Dorsey, Chair |
| Report of Nominating Committee | Niecy Chambers, Chair |
| Presentation of 2025-2026 Budget | Niecy Chambers, Treasurer |
| Direction to the Board | Members |
| Announcements and Other Business | |

6:00 p.m. Greetings and Cash Bar

6:15 p.m. Buffet Supper

7:05 p.m. Guest Speaker, Jared DeMarinis, State Administrator of Elections

7:35 p.m. Q&A

7:45 p.m. Announcements

8:00 p.m. Conclusion

About our speaker: On September 1, 2023, Jared DeMarinis became Maryland’s State Administrator of Elections after the unanimous selection by the bipartisan 5-member State Board of Elections. Previously, he served for 18 years as the Director of Candidacy and Campaign Finance. In that position, he took a proactive approach to election administration in campaign finance, making Maryland a model state for the use of new technologies by campaigns, campaign disclosure and enforcement.

Jared has a law degree from Rutgers School of Law-Newark and a bachelor’s degree from Villanova University.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

2025 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025

CAFÉ MEZZANOTE, SEVERNA PARK

MEETING WORKBOOK

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2025 Annual Membership Meeting Committee: Niecy Chambers, Alexis Dorsey, Joyce Martin, Amanda SubbaRao

Cover photo: *After a private guided tour of the Maryland State House, LWVAAC participants watched the proceedings of the House of Delegates, where the League’s nonpartisan voter services were publicly acknowledged by Delegate Dana Jones (D-Dist 30A). See report on p. 9. (photo by K. Larrabee)*

President's Letter, Amanda SubbaRao

Dear Members,

They say, "it takes a village" or maybe we should say "it takes a League." I'd like to thank the volunteers, who contributed countless hours, and all our members for their support this eventful year. Election years always bring a flurry of activities, and the 2024 election cycle was no exception, as you will see in the portfolio reports in this workbook. We can all take pride in LWVAAC's accomplishments this past year.



Anne Arundel voters rely on our League materials and events to stay apprised of election and candidate information, especially for down-ballot candidates. When we told prospective voters about VOTE411, we sometimes heard, "I know who I'm voting for." But when asked about the Board of Education, some had been so focused on the presidential contest, they hadn't even thought about that race.

Our Voter Services team was hard at work throughout the year, providing voter resources through VOTE411 and the *Voters' Guide*, hosting two candidate forums, organizing and staffing voter registration drives, and speaking at community events.

Transparency in government is critical for a strong democracy. Our Observer Corps and Action Chair continue to monitor the local issues that are important to our League and provide testimony on local legislation that the League supports.

Education on issues that affect policy is also key to our League work. Our fall kickoff dove into some of the issues around open primaries, while, in the winter, we got a chance to see how the visualization of climate data can tell the story of how Earth has been rapidly changing over the past decades. This spring, we delved into the federal judiciary by participating in the LWWUS consensus study.

We are stronger together. To that end, we've improved our messaging to ensure all feel welcome at League events, and we've reintroduced The League Connection as a regular opportunity to meet in person. We have also grown our partnerships with other organizations.

The League's mission to empower voters and defend democracy has never been more important. Mis- and disinformation has continued to grow rapidly, with tools like AI making it harder and harder to discern good information from bad. Voting rights are being eroded around the country. As Governor Moore said at the League of Women Voters of Maryland Legislative Breakfast, "The work is now, and the work is here." I know we will rise to the challenges of the coming year. Thank you again for all your support.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2024 Annual Meeting, Joyce Martin, Secretary

LWVAAC held its 2024 Annual Meeting at the Pip Moyer Center in Annapolis, May 15, 2024. The evening meeting was attended by 22 members, 3 guests, keynote speaker Delegate Shaneka Henson, her chief-of-staff Beryle Downs, and LWVMD President Linda Kohn.

President Amanda SubbaRao recounted some of the League's outstanding achievements of the year and thanked the Board and members for their work. She then introduced LWVMD President Linda Kohn who acknowledged SubbaRao's contributions on the state League Board and commended LWVAAC for its high level of activity.

Program Recommendation: Root moved that LWVAAC readopt all current policy positions. The motion carried.

Bylaws: Dorsey introduced minor changes in the bylaws that were necessary to align LWVAAC with the LWVUS Transformation. She moved that the League accept the amended bylaws. Motion carried.

Budget: Chambers presented the budget for 2024-25. She explained that the budget reflected LWVAAC's uncertainty about income from dues after the Transformation is implemented. Chambers moved that the General Fund budget be accepted as proposed. Motion carried. Chambers then reviewed the proposed Education Fund budget. Director Vicki Jordan made a motion to increase the budget for Voter Registration and Education by \$500 and to take the money from Education Fund reserves. The motion to amend the budget passed. Chambers moved that the revised Education Fund budget be adopted. Motion carried.

Nominations: Niecy Chambers presented the slate of nominees.

Officers: Alexis Dorsey, Vice President (2024-2026)
Niecy Chambers, Treasurer (2024-2026)

Directors: Vicki Jordan (2024-2026)
Delia Scott (2024-2026)
Alfa Stevens (2024-2026)

Nominating Committee (Off-Board): Kathy Lottenbach (2024-2025)

Chambers called for a vote on the nominees. The slate was elected by voice vote.

New Business: SubbaRao explained some of the details and changes in the new LWVUS Transformation. Jordan shared information about the 3rd Congressional District and the Board of Education candidate forums that will take place in the fall.

Meeting was adjourned. Guest speaker Delegate Henson reviewed the 2024 General Assembly session and discussed bills she had introduced that aligned with League positions, such as affordable housing and transportation. A celebration of LWVAAC's 80th Anniversary and recognition of outgoing Board Director Kathy Larrabee concluded the evening.

2025-2026 PROGRAM RECOMMENDATION, Abby Root, Chair

LWVAAC held a virtual meeting Tuesday, March 11, 2025 to review LWVAAC public policy positions. All members were invited to attend and/or submit input via a questionnaire. There was consensus among members to readopt all of our local League positions (see lwvaacmd.org/current_positions). No new local studies or updates were proposed. Participants recommended that our program for the coming year focus on three local areas of concern:

- 1) Participation in democracy
- 2) Immigrant affairs
- 3) County government.

REPORT OF THE 2024-2025 BYLAWS COMMITTEE, Alexis Dorsey, Chair, Susan Cochran, Gege Polevitzky

After careful evaluation, the committee decided the current LWVAAC bylaws are in compliance and do not require revision. (See lwvaacmd.org/bylaws_2024)

REPORT OF THE 2025-2026 NOMINATING COMMITTEE, Niecy Chambers, Chair; Kathy Lottenbach, Joyce Martin

The committee presents the following slate of candidates for election at the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting. The slate has a vacancy for the office of president. Nominations will be accepted from the floor. Members are reminded to verify the nominee’s willingness to serve if elected.

Board Officers:

- President (2025-2027): **VACANT**
- Secretary (2025-2027): Niecy Chambers
- Treasurer (2025-2026 to fill unexpired term): Alfa Stevens

Board Directors:

- Marg Duffy (2025-2027)
- Vera Herath (2025-2027)
- Abby Root (2025-2027)
- Amanda SubbaRao (2025-2026 to fill unexpired term)

Nominating Committee (off-board)

- Kathy Lottenbach (2025-2026)

The Board has appointed Marg Duffy to serve as Nominating Committee Chair for the 2025-26 program year. A third committee member will be appointed at the June Board meeting.

If no one is elected to the office of president, LWVAAC will be managed by its Executive Governing Board, in accordance with the bylaws.

ARTICLE V, Section 3c. Governing Executive Board

A Governing Executive Board shall consist of the Board members, both elected and appointed, acting as a governing body without an executive. The Board members shall assume the powers of the President and divide the powers among themselves.

REPORT OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEE, Niecy Chambers, Delia Scott, Amanda SubbaRao

**League of Women Voters of Anne Arundel County
FY 2025-26 Proposed Budget**

| OPERATING FUND | FY 25-26 Proposed Budget | FY 24-25 Budget | FY 24-25 Estimate | FY 23-24 Actual | FY 22-23 Actual |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Beginning Acct Balance | | | \$6,060 | \$8,305 | \$9,047 |
| INCOME | | | | | |
| Dues | \$929 | \$4,405 | \$4,372 | \$5,068 | \$6,445 |
| Contributions | \$500 | \$175 | \$512 | \$210 | \$80 |
| Event Income | \$2,500 | \$1,040 | \$2,085 | \$853 | \$1,400 |
| Wares Sales | \$225 | \$675 | \$90 | \$621 | |
| LWVUS "Make whole" allotment | | | | | |
| Other Revenue (collected sales tax) | \$14 | | \$0 | \$3 | |
| Total Income | \$4,167 | \$6,295 | \$7,059 | \$6,755 | \$7,925 |
| DISBURSEMENTS | | | | | |
| LWVUS PMP | \$2,368 | \$2,688 | \$2,688 | \$3,328 | \$3,216 |
| LWVMD PMP | \$1,036 | \$1,176 | \$1,176 | \$1,456 | \$1,407 |
| Meetings & Events | \$2,500 | \$2,250 | \$2,758 | \$1,888 | \$2,577 |
| Community Outreach | \$150 | \$775 | \$659 | \$1,704 | \$334 |
| Operating Expenses | \$1,113 | \$906 | \$1,842 | \$624 | \$1,133 |
| Total Disbursements | \$7,167 | \$7,795 | \$9,122 | \$9,000 | \$8,667 |
| To/(From) Reserves | (\$3,000) | (\$1,500) | (\$2,063) | (\$2,245) | (\$742) |
| Ending Acct Balance | | | \$3,997 | \$6,060 | \$8,305 |

Operating Fund revenue is expected to decline in FY 25-26 as the LWVUS Transformation takes full effect. This is because LWVAAC retains a smaller portion of members' dues than we did prior to the Transformation. LWVUS expects that income

will rebound as membership grows. The national League has pledged to make Leagues whole for any losses experienced in the first 2 years after implementation.

The budget anticipates that Operating Fund expenses will exceed income by \$3,000. The reason for the large deficit is that the national and state Leagues will assess per-member-payments (PMPs) for a final time in FY 25-26, based on LWVAAC’s roster on January 31, 2025. LWVAAC collected dues for these members at our pre-Transformation rates and the \$3,400 owed to the state and national Leagues is in our checking account. The reduction in reserves is due to a timing mismatch between the fiscal year the income was earned and when it will be disbursed

Because the Operating Fund will be left with a smaller reserve, other expenses have been budgeted conservatively. Based on actual FY 25-26 income and League priorities, the Board will authorize extra-budgetary expenditures as necessary and prudent.

**League of Women Voters of Anne Arundel County
FY 2025-26 Proposed Budget**

| | FY 25-26 Proposed Budget | FY 24-25 Budget | FY 24-25 Estimate | FY 23-24 Actual | FY 22-23 Actual |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| EDUCATION FUND | | | | | |
| Beginning Acct. Balance | | | \$9,001 | \$9,263 | \$9,170 |
| INCOME | | | | | |
| Annual Fundraiser | \$3,350 | \$4,000 | \$4,400 | \$3,618 | \$3,741 |
| Miscellaneous Donations | \$1,000 | \$1,500 | \$1,543 | \$995 | \$1,044 |
| Voters' Guide Study Reimbursement | | | | | \$750 |
| Total Income | \$4,350 | \$5,500 | \$5,943 | \$4,614 | \$5,534 |
| DISBURSEMENTS | | | | | |
| Candidate Forums | \$1,000 | \$1,000 | \$1,533 | \$0 | |
| Voter Reg. & Education | \$1,250 | \$1,000 | \$1,374 | \$860 | \$316 |
| Voter Guides & Vote411 | \$2,000 | \$3,000 | \$1,164 | \$3,403 | \$4,178 |
| Educ. Public Mtgs | \$500 | \$400 | \$0 | \$55 | |
| Fundraising | \$225 | \$225 | \$225 | \$187 | \$588 |
| Community/League Support | \$375 | \$375 | \$392 | \$370 | \$360 |
| Total Disbursements | \$5,350 | \$6,000 | \$4,689 | \$4,876 | \$5,442 |
| To/(From) Reserves | (\$1,000) | (\$500) | \$1,254 | (\$262) | \$93 |
| Ending Account Balance | | | \$10,255 | \$9,001 | \$9,263 |

The proposed FY 25-26 budget for the LWVAAC Education Fund anticipates standard levels of donations and maintains support for our League’s core voter services.

LWVAAC 2024-2025 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

LWVUS Transformation, Amanda SubbaRao

In February 2025, LWVUS implemented their new online Member Portal as part of the Transformation Roadmap. By moving to flexible membership dues and a uniform payment process, LWVUS expects to grow and diversify local League rosters nationwide. The centralized member portal makes it easy to join from any League website.

All members, other than Life members, will use the new Member Portal to renew; an exception is if you pay dues by check. Renewal notices will come from an lwv.org email address. The first notification will be emailed 60 days before your due date, and reminders will follow at 30-day intervals. When you're ready to renew, be sure to log into the Member Portal with the email address at which you receive the renewal notification. You'll be emailed a login access code so you don't have to remember another password. Once logged in, you can pay your dues, sign up for autorenewal, check that your personal information is correct and answer questions about your areas of interest. If you renew early, your membership will be extended one year from your renewal date, not from the date you pay.

If you have questions about the renewal process, or encounter any issues, please reach out to the Membership Committee at memb-aac@lwvaacmd.org.

Membership, Niecy Chambers

When long-time Membership Chair *extraordinaire* Kathy Larrabee stepped down from the LWVAAC Board at the end of the 2023-24 program year, we knew we needed an entire team to fill her shoes. We're grateful to VP Alexis Dorsey and Directors Susan Cochran, Hannah Collins, and Delia Scott for volunteering to take on the responsibilities of the Membership Chair in addition to their own portfolios. As LWVAAC's inaugural Membership Committee, they reached out to new members, planned events, developed volunteer opportunities, and brainstormed new ways to recruit, engage and retain LWVAAC members. If you enjoy meeting people and are enthusiastic about helping strengthen our League for the future, please consider joining their committee. Email memb-aac@lwvaacmd.org to learn more.

Since February, LWVAAC has welcomed 13 new members. Some were personally recruited by other members, while others found us online or at events. LWVAAC's current roster totals 111, a 10 percent increase over last year at this time. We look forward to meeting and working with you all!

Activities, Events and Programs

Annual Retreat, Niecy Chambers

The June 11, 2024, annual retreat was held at the home of Niecy and Jim Chambers in Annapolis. An overview of the LWVUS Transformation, scheduled for implementation in February 2025, led to a lengthy discussion of ways to improve member engagement. Suggestions included regularly scheduled meetings, personal outreach, informal gatherings in different parts of the county, and meaningful volunteer opportunities. The group also brainstormed ways to raise public awareness of the League, such as social media and other digital communications, and library and community-based events. Another suggestion was to train LWVAAC moderators and presenters and actively seek speaking opportunities. Girl Scout troops and HOAs were mentioned as possibilities.

Members suggested several topics for future programs, including the social impact of fees versus taxes, revitalizing the sense of community within neighborhoods, stormwater management, infrastructure, affordable housing, and smart growth. Finally, retreat participants agreed on a calendar of events for the 2024-25 program year.

Fall Welcome Back: Abby Root, Chair; Alexis Dorsey, Joyce Martin, Dona Sauerburger

LWVAAC's Fall Welcome Back event kicks off the League program year with a chance to meet in person, enjoy a light buffet and learn about a topic of interest to the League. This year's gathering, which took place September 14 at the Busch Annapolis Library, focused on *Primary Elections: Options and Opportunities*. LWVAAC members and guests attended, along with representatives of the League's community partner, the Annapolis Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Types of primary elections that are held across the country were discussed: closed, open, and different varieties of hybrid elections.

The guest speaker was Kenjeray Bennett, a law student at University of Baltimore School of Law. He spoke about the legalities of the primary election system in Maryland. Members Joyce Martin and Dona Sauerburger gave brief presentations explaining the various options and reviewing the pros and cons of the different primary election methods. A lively discussion followed the presentation.

Enrichment Programs, Marguerite Duffy, Chair

LWVAAC enrichment programs are open to the public.

- **Field Trip:** Last August, just ahead of Women's Equality Day, several LWVAAC members and friends traveled to New York City to see the Broadway production

of *Suffs*, a historical musical based on the ratification of the 19th Amendment and women's fight for the right to vote. The expedition also included lunch and a visit to the Morgan Library and Museum, where the first book banned in America was on display. The Broadway show was outstanding, and everyone enjoyed the excursion. However, the bus and train trip to and from New York made for a long day. We've recently learned that *Suffs* is coming to Baltimore. Another field trip may be in the offing...watch your email!

- **Books for Learning Discussions:** The League will host two Books for Learning programs this year. The first took place in October 2024, a well-attended and timely discussion of *The Fall of Roe* by Elizabeth Dias and Lisa Lerner, moderated by member Cindy Barry. Cindy will return as moderator for our discussion of *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* by Maria Ressa on May 22, 2025.
- **Holiday Breakfast:** In December, LWVAAC returned to the Light House Bistro for a festive celebration in support of the League's annual charity drive for the Light House, Annapolis' homeless prevention support center.
- **Earth Day 2025:** During Earth Month 2025, LWVAAC was a sponsor to the Naptown Philharmonic Orchestra's *Earth Day Tribute* concert. The performance included *Earth Symphony* by Jake Runestad. The piece used growling brass, raging percussions, and shrieking woodwinds to illustrate a series of ecological cataclysms (forest fires, storms). JoAnn Kulesza, Director of Arundel Vocal Arts Society, led the symphony's choral accompaniment. Annapolis Poet Laureate, Jefferson Holland, performed the symphony's lyrics and recited *Osprey's Song*, a poem he wrote sitting at Rachel Carson's desk in Silver Spring, Maryland. Over 400 people attended the concert at Maryland Hall, bringing attention to the League through advertising, programs, a voter information table, and a digital display on stage with the LWVAAC logo and website.

The League Connection (TLC), Alexis Dorsey, Hannah Collins, Susan Cochran, Delia Scott

Member engagement was a primary focus of the 2024 annual retreat. After researching options and consulting with the newly reestablished LWV of Carroll County on their successful member recruitment program, the Membership Committee reintroduced The League Connection (TLC), an informal social gathering held on the first Saturday of each month at a local coffee shop or restaurant.

The TLC has several goals. By meeting regularly in public spaces, the TLC will raise awareness of LWVAAC and provide opportunities for anyone interested in the League to connect. By encouraging the informal sharing of ideas, these events will give

LWVAAC fresh insights into issues that concern our local community. By bolstering the social connection among members, LWVAAC will gain strength and leadership.

The first TLC, held March 1 at Panera Bread at Festival at Riva, attracted more than 20 current and prospective members. An unofficial survey gave the event two thumbs up, with several people voicing support for continuing the Saturday morning scheduling.

Although the April 5 TLC was more lightly attended, the conversation was no less lively and included a guest eager to learn firsthand about our League. The next TLC will be on Saturday, June 7, at Glory Days in Edgewater. We hope you'll come make The League Connection!

In the coming year, the Membership Committee may plan more structured monthly meetings with a specific topic and speaker or panel. We are currently gathering members' feedback and suggestions about which day of the week, time of day and location work best. Please send your input to memb-aac@lwvaacmd.org.

Maryland State House Tour, Kathy Larrabee

LWVAAC'S educational field trips aim to help members learn about local and state government operations, as well as Maryland history. A recent excursion took a small group of LWVAAC members and several guests behind the scenes of the Maryland State House. While the State House guest book shows names of visitors from as far away as Japan and the state of California, most on the League tour said they had not been inside the capitol building despite living relatively nearby.

The early morning tour was led by a professional guide from the Department of Legislative Services. The tour was intentionally planned to precede the legislative sessions, which begin promptly at 10 a.m. each weekday morning during the 90-day legislative session, except on Mondays. This tour timing allowed participants to observe both the House and Senate sessions, alternately, from the galleries overlooking the chambers as guests of their state representatives.

In addition to learning the rich history of the State House, dating back to the late 1700s, a tour highlight was seeing in person the exquisitely restored original Senate and House chambers. Following the tour, while seated alternately in the House and Senate galleries, the LWVAAC tour guests were recognized by Delegate Dana Jones (D-Dist. 30A) and Senator Sheneka Henson (D-Dist. 30). Specifically, each representative mentioned the League's voters' guides, voter registration drives, and nonpartisan candidate forums.

At the time of the League visit, with only three weeks remaining in the 90-day session and numerous bills processed and passed to the opposite chamber for action, both legislative bodies were operating at full capacity.

Program Planning, Abby Root, Action Chair

Every other year, local Leagues are asked to review the LWVMD public policy positions and submit study proposals for consideration at that year's state League convention. LWVAAC met for this purpose on January 28, 2025 and reached consensus in favor of retaining all LWVMD positions.

LWVAAC submitted a proposal for a new statewide study: *The Effect of Polarization on Legislative Effectiveness in Maryland*. Our League felt that research on this subject could identify additional actions the League could take to reduce polarization, thereby enhancing government effectiveness in addressing the needs of its citizens. LWVMD evaluates all study proposals submitted by local Leagues and decides whether to recommend their adoption by delegates at the State League convention in June.

To participate in LWVAAC's annual program planning, members were invited to attend the March 2025 Board meeting and/or submit input via a questionnaire. There was consensus among members to readopt all of our local League positions. No new local studies or updates were proposed. Participants recommended that LWVAAC program activities focus on participation in democracy, immigrant affairs and county government.

LWVUS Federal Judiciary Study Consensus, Niecy Chambers, Alexis Dorsey

LWVAAC held a Zoom session on March 30, 2025, to discuss and decide consensus on a national LWV federal judiciary study, adopted by delegates at the LWVUS 2024 Convention. LWVAAC members were joined by three guests from the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC), who had produced an informative fact sheet about the study and volunteered to act as resources for our discussion.

The federal judiciary study was unusual in that it (1) covered a broad range of issues within an entire branch of government and (2) was designed as a more streamlined approach to consensus studies, with a fast-track timeline of announcing a position at the LWVUS Council in June 2025.

The group agreed that maintaining the independence of the judiciary was essential. With that basic premise, the discussion produced mixed responses to the position statements proposed by the LWVUS study committee. Members supported the statements that transparency, accountability, independence, and ethics are essential to an effective Federal Judiciary, but had reservations about how these standards would be applied and enforced. The group reached consensus against or no consensus on the remaining position statements.

In conclusion, members expressed grave concerns about the speed with which the study was developed as well as the sweeping nature of its recommended statements. Participants agreed that the judiciary's selection process is inherently political, and the

challenge lies in addressing the influence of politics on the court's decisions. The group felt the League could focus on issues related to the selection and confirmation of judges, rather than taking a broad stance on judicial issues such as accountability and ethics. A study on term limits, age requirements for retirement, or the selection process for Supreme Court Justices was recommended.

Voter Services, Vera Herath and Vicki Jordan, co-chairs

Voter Services (VS) is co-chaired by Vera Herath and Vicki Jordan with invaluable assistance from key team member Delia Hancock Miller. 2024 was an election year, and, needless to say, we were busy!

Voter Registration and Education

2024-25 Highlights:

- Voter Services participated in the 4th annual Annapolis Pride Festival on June 1, 2024. LWVAAC has reserved a table at this year's Pride Festival on May 31.
- In our continued cooperation with the Anne Arundel County Public Library (AACPL) system and the county Board of Elections (BoE), we put on two *Ready to Vote!* events. On August 29 at the Eastport-Annapolis Neck branch, Nicole Hill of BoE gave a presentation on voting that included essential information for voters in the 2024 elections. On September 12, the Odenton branch featured a static display and an information table, which was hosted by Ms. Hill and an LWVAAC member.
- August 26, VS was pleased to be included in the Back-to-School Block Party at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC), which featured a range of resources available for students. Then VR was back on campus on September 17 for National Voter Registration Day (NVRD).
- September 10, VS assisted Nicole Hill in demonstrating voting equipment and guiding 10th grade students through a hands-on mock voting experience at Annapolis High School's "Election Fair."
- October 8, Herath spoke at the October monthly meeting of GFWC Woman's Club of Linthicum Heights, during which ballot questions were explained and election information provided related to the Presidential general election.
- Co-chair Herath again organized and executed a highly successful high school VR drive mid-September to early October. VS visited all 15 county public high schools. League volunteer registrars were assisted by volunteers from NAACP-AAC and AAUW.

- Co-chair Jordan continued invaluable work providing voter registration and information to inmates at the Ordnance Road Correctional Center (ORCC) and the Jennifer Road Detention Center (JRDC).
- March 29, 2025, Herath and Jordan hosted a table and gave a presentation at the Youth Connections Mini Conference put on by the Annapolis Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. (AACDST).

In addition, VS organized and/or participated in other community events, including:

- Juneteenth, partnering with NAACP-AAC;
- Naturalization Ceremony at William Paca House, July 4;
- Honoring John Lewis, July 17;
- NAACP Family Day, July 27;
- National Night Out, August 6;
- Women's Equality Day, August 26;
- NVRD, at AACCC, and LUSH Cosmetics store in Annapolis Mall, September 17 and 22, respectively;
- 10th Annual Women's Empowerment Forum, sponsored by The Links, Inc., Annapolis Chapter, March 8, 2025.

Developing Partnerships: A partnership kick-off meeting was held last August with members of the Annapolis Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (AACDST). LWVAAC worked with AACDST members at VR events and both of our 2024 candidate forums.

The League supported another new partner, Junior League of Annapolis (JLA), in their advocacy training event on October 5. Jordan represented LWVAAC, while Nikki Tyree, LWVMD Executive Director, participated on the panel. Tyree spoke about the multifaceted role of the LWV in providing voter education and advocacy. She stressed the value of knowing one's candidates and legislators, and understanding the issues and bills being worked by our local, state, and national politicians.

Several League members also attended JLA's Galentine's Day event on February 2, 2025. The honorees were: Amal Awad, Anne Arundel County Chief of Police, Trisha Wolford, Anne Arundel County Fire Chief, and Colonel Yolanda Gore, Garrison Commander at Ft. George G. Meade. Each honoree gave brief remarks, highlighting their drive, determination, and inspiration to achieve all that they have and the work they continue to accomplish every day.

Candidate Forums

In partnership with the LWVs of Carroll and Howard Counties, VS hosted a 3rd Congressional District candidate forum on September 24, 2024, at the Horowitz Center Smith Theatre, Howard Community College in Columbia. Co-sponsors included: AAUW-AAC; NAACP-AAC and Carroll County; National Coalition of 100 Black Women-AAC; Iota Lambda Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; Columbia Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.; North Arundel County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; AACDST Sorority, Inc.; National Coalition of 100 Black Women-AAC; and the Maryland Alliance of Black School Educators. Candidates Sarah Elfreth, Rob Steinberger, and Miguel Barajas were respectful of each other and the audience, as they engaged in a thoughtful and energetic exchange of ideas focusing on issues of importance to voters. The candidates were also available both prior to and following the forum to talk one-on-one with attendees. Moderator Shelley Brown, Executive Director of MyLaw.Org, was excellent. The evening proved to be very positive and informative for everyone.

October 10, a successful candidate forum was hosted for Anne Arundel County Board of Education. Hosting partners were: AAUW-AAC; NAACP-AAC; National Coalition of 100 Black Women-AAC, AACDST Sorority, Inc.; North Arundel County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; Maryland Alliance of Black School Educators, and Greater Crofton Council.

In keeping with the League's "no empty seat" rule, only Districts 6 and 7 participated. Two of the other five districts had uncontested races, and one of the two candidates in the remaining three districts could not attend. Several candidates from these districts attended and spoke with audience members before and after the forum. The forum took place at the Village Commons Community Center at Waugh Chapel in Gambrills. Moderator Dr. Tanya Millner, Provost and Vice President for Learning at AACC, did an excellent job and would be happy to serve again.

Approximately 125 people attended, and the forum's goal was met. Candidates were respectful with each other and the audience.

Both forums relied on having a panel ask the candidates questions that had been prepared in advance by representatives of the sponsoring organizations and local community. The format worked well, and the VS recommends it for future forums.

In 2025, the City of Annapolis will hold elections for mayor and city council (all 7 seats). VS host a mayoral candidate forum on September 30, and planning is well underway. JLA and AACDST will co-host, and the League will call on other regular partners, as always.

VOTE411.org & Voters' Guides, Niecy Chambers

VOTE411.org refers both to the LWV-owned public website that offers voters customized election information, and to the software application Leagues across the country use to gather candidate responses and create voters' guides. LWVMD purchases the license for LWVAAC and other Maryland Leagues to use the VOTE411 app to communicate with candidates, pose questions on public policy issues, post explanations of ballot measures, promote candidate forums, and publicize voting dates and requirements. Information is exported from VOTE411 to create PDF and print versions of Anne Arundel County voters' guide.

For the 2024 General Election, Delia Scott researched and wrote explanations of the four Anne Arundel County ballot questions, and the state League provided background on the Maryland Constitutional Amendment. All seven County Board of Education seats were up for election, with two districts uncontested. Overall, candidate participation in VOTE411 was very strong, with the exception of the Appellate Court Judges and Presidential nominees.

APG Media of Chesapeake printed LWVAAC's *Voters' Guide for the 2024 Maryland General Election* on newsprint in half-fold tabloid format, resulting in significant cost savings as compared to the booklet format of the 2024 primary election guide. Despite delayed receipt of the Presidential candidate responses from LWVUS, we took delivery of 5,000 copies of the 24-page 4-color guide on October 1. Due to a printing malfunction, the initial print order contained an illegible 2-page spread, and APG reprinted copies free of charge.

League volunteers distributed copies to county public libraries and senior centers, residential facilities, and other community centers. Unlike previous elections, the Busch Annapolis Library kept voters' guides behind the desk and handed them out on request, which resulted in the library distributing fewer copies than anticipated. We expect that the demand for print copies will continue to decline as more people rely on digital access through VOTE411. According to Google Analytics provided by LWVUS, more than 11,000 County residents used VOTE411 in 2024 and nearly 124,000 statewide.

We thank our volunteers and supporters for making this valued resource possible.

Observer Corps, Alexis Dorsey, Chair

The Observer Corps (OC) is a committee of the LWVAAC that observes agencies of Anne Arundel County government to understand their processes, gather information and promote transparency. The OC continues to monitor the County Council, Planning Advisory Board, Board of Education, Board of Elections, Transportation Commission,

and Housing Commission of Anne Arundel County. OC members choose their area of interest and manage their time commitment.

If you are the type of person who enjoys learning how the sausage is made, then the Observer Corps may be the place for you. When you have questions about a bill, resolution, budget, or development plan under consideration by the County Council, members of the Observer Corps can help you find answers. We work as a team to get to know our local government and assess whether it's operating effectively, transparently and in accordance with League principles and positions. Give it a try!

Action, Abby Root, Chair

The Action chair advocates by testifying on LWVAAC's behalf, writing letters to the editor, emailing action alerts on current legislative issues, and joining coalitions when issues align. The purpose is to educate the public on the pros and cons of an issue, explain why the League participates in advocacy for or against the issue, and encourage our members and the public to advocate on their own behalf. This year the LWVAAC testified before the County Council on the following legislation.

Bill 72-24 The Housing Attainability Act of 2024. (Passed)

This legislation creates an inclusionary housing policy requiring developers to make a percentage of new units affordable to moderate income residents under certain circumstances. The legislation sets forth specific code changes that allow maximizing land use while balancing the character of communities and increasing the availability of housing. Chairwoman Pickard, Councilwomen Rodvien and Hummer, Councilman Smith and County Executive Pittman sponsored the bill. The bill passed 4-3 along party lines.

Coalitions and Community Outreach

Anne Arundel Affordable Housing Coalition (AAHC), Abby Root, Liaison

As stated on the AAHC website, "The Coalition brings together a wide range of organizations and people interested in creating and preserving affordable housing, providing life enhancing services to residents, or assisting persons of limited income to find and access affordable housing." Members include nonprofit organizations, developers, builders, advocates, public officials, and a broad range of other professionals engaged in the creation and preservation of affordable housing. LWVAAC is a member.

Root attended the Anne Arundel Affordable Housing Coalition's Holiday party on December 19th, 2024, at the Lighthouse Bistro. Housing advocates, affordable housing builders and other members of the coalition were in attendance. County Executive

Pittman spoke about all that has been accomplished and what has to be done to make Anne Arundel an affordable place to live and work. The event was good exposure for the League.

Annapolis Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. (AACDST), Amanda SubbaRao

This past year, LWVAAC entered into a formal partnership with the Annapolis Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. (AACDST), in conjunction with a national Delta Sigma Theta outreach initiative, *Election 2024: Fortitude on the Frontlines*. Members of both organizations participated in pre-election Mall Walks last fall to raise awareness of VOTE411 and our voters' guides. AACDST volunteers helped at the League's two candidate forums and at an Annapolis High School Election Fair, which provided students with an opportunity to walk through the voting process. This spring, Voter Services co-chairs Vera Herath and Vicki Jordan gave a presentation on "The Importance of Civic Engagement" and hosted an information table at the AACDST Youth Connections Mini Conference. AACDST will also partner with the League on the upcoming Mayoral Candidate Forum. We look forward to continuing this partnership in the coming year.

2025 Regional History Day Competition

For over 50 years, Maryland Humanities has sponsored a student history competition, aligned with National History Day® (NHD), encouraging deep research on broad historical themes. Students showcase research through exhibits, performances, websites, documentaries, and essays. The 2025 NHD theme was "Rights and Responsibilities in History."

Over 65 students from 14 county schools presented their projects at the 2025 Regional History Day competition in February, where LWVAAC Director Hannah Collins participated as a volunteer judge for the second time. Our League sponsored a Special Award for the Project Best Representing Women's History. This was LWVAAC's 4th year as a special award sponsor.

Hannah and VP Alexis Dorsey represented LWVAAC at the awards ceremony in March. Pony Brenner of Chesapeake High School received the League-sponsored prize for her Special Award performance titled, *"The Right and Responsibility of Women to Pursue Education."*

Affordable Housing Symposium, Abby Root, Action Chair

On October 29, 2024, LWVAAC Affordable Housing liaison and Action Chair Abby Root attended the second annual Anne Arundel Affordable Housing Symposium at the

Crowne Plaza Hotel. Chase Home Inc. (www.chaselloydhouse.org) sponsored the event again this year.

The symposium is a one-day in-person gathering of stakeholders in housing and community development working together to better understand affordable housing issues and to discuss and identify a range of solutions to meet the needs of Anne Arundel County residents. The stakeholders, including policy makers, government agencies, developers, non-profit and faith-based organizations, and key community members, convened to address the affordable housing crisis in Anne Arundel County.

A key takeaway from the Symposium is that the need for affordable housing is a challenge for jurisdictions across the country, Anne Arundel County included. Although there are no simple solutions, many agencies, associations, local governments, and individuals are working hard to develop ways to address the problems and increase the supply of affordable housing.

Growth Action Network (GAN), Hannah Collins, Liaison

As an organizational member of GAN, LWVAAC receives communications about land use issues, as well as invitations to meetings with county officials and action alerts. All League members are welcome and encouraged to participate in GAN activities.

GAN is currently working to gain public support for establishing an Anne Arundel County Planning Commission, which would require an amendment to the County Charter. County Council could put the amendment on the next general election ballot with approval by a supermajority or the measure could be advanced to the ballot by a successful petition drive. GAN Executive Director Matt Minahan reached out to LWVAAC for information about the petition drive process and also to seek our support for the charter amendment. Although the League doesn't have a position specific to Planning Commissions, LWVAAC may be able to support the initiative if other League principles and positions can be applied.

Communications, Ashley Oleson and Alfa Stevens, Co-Chairs; Niecy Chambers, Hannah Collins, Kathy Larrabee, Amanda SubbaRao

From driving engagement to keeping the community informed, the Communications Committee plays a vital role in shaping how LWVAAC connects and communicates. The team uses a mix of digital tools to support the Board's goals, spark member involvement, and build strong ties with the public. A lively, user-friendly website acts as a digital front door, welcoming visitors, spotlighting League work, and often serving as the first stop for new members exploring the League. To keep members in the loop, timely updates via email and mobile notifications are sent, ensuring important info is always at their fingertips. One of the League's signature projects is *The Voter*,

LWVAAC's quarterly newsletter. Carefully curated and widely distributed, it reaches League members, allies, and community leaders, keeping them engaged with the latest initiatives, events, and advocacy efforts.

Email Announcements: While eblasts remain the most efficient means of sharing League information, the Communications Committee recognizes that email can be an unwelcome intrusion on people's time. Eblasts are only sent as necessary and use several different email broadcasters and templates to make it easier for recipients to identify the source and purpose of the email. It is also possible for recipients to opt in and out of receiving specific LWVAAC communications.

Members receive eblasts from the LWVAAC President as well as from LWVAAC Communications, Voter Services, Action, and Program. Since the last annual meeting, a total of 44 eblasts have been sent to announce upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, newsletters, and other important information.

Website: The LWVAAC website is the backbone of League communications. The website is both an archive and a window to our future. Webpages publicize events and collect RSVPs, sell tickets and wares, promote volunteer opportunities at LWVAAC and our community partners, share information, and encourage action. Eblasts and posts on the League in Action app and Facebook link to the website, introducing newcomers to the League and inviting them to join.

Following implementation of the LWVUS Transformation in February, we updated our League's join/renew page to reflect the new sliding dues structure and redirect members to the LWV Member Portal. After they've logged in, members have the opportunity to pay dues, change personal information and contact preferences, and respond to questions about their League interests. A corresponding printable join form is posted on our website for members who prefer to pay their dues by check.

Along with webpages for all LWVAAC events, this year we added an ERA resource page to the website. We also posted blogs about community events, volunteer opportunities and LWVUS advocacy, and updated the Voter's Toolkit section of the website with links to videos of the two Fall 2024 candidate forums, LWVAAC's *Voters' Guide for the 2024 General Election* and other election information.

Fresh content is key to an engaging and effective website. The Communications Committee welcomes your ideas and input.

Facebook: The Communications Committee continues to use Facebook as a key platform for sharing voting information that informs, empowers, and reinforces the League's reputation as a reliable, nonpartisan voice. The League has also been active in promoting advocacy efforts at the county level and encouraging community

involvement in the League's initiatives. Most recently, our The League Connection (TLC) events have generated increased engagement; candidate forums are also primary sources of interest. In addition to highlighting League events and local news, Facebook helps amplify the impact of national, state, and local Leagues by sharing their content and encouraging public interaction. While most of our social media efforts have been centered on Facebook, we also launched an Instagram account during the 2024 election cycle to help promote forums and other important election information. We hope to utilize this tool more frequently in the coming year.

Newsletter: *The Voter*, LWVAAC's newsletter, has been published on a quarterly basis since 2020. It is distributed via email to LWVAAC's broad community of supporters, which includes current and former members, county representatives, donors, community partners, volunteers and others. Issues of *The Voter* were published in June, September and December 2024 and March 2025. Board members with responsibility for portfolios or programs generally contribute the majority of the articles. The *Faces of our League* member profile is a popular regular feature, along with timely pieces about our state and national Leagues, county government and local community. Members are invited to contribute research articles on topics of interest to the League, such as *The Life and Legacy of a Landfill Cell* (June 2024) and *The National Debt: what it is and why it matters* (December 2024). Our thanks to Kathy Larrabee and Lois Fussell for providing these informative pieces.

Other Media: LWVAAC recently purchased two floor-sized banners for display at voter registration drives and other events. We expect these eye-catching banners to help raise public awareness of our League.

LWVMD is exploring the use of Slack as a way of improving real-time communications among members. Slack is a team communication platform that allows users to chat, collaborate, and share files, acting as a central hub for team interactions. The state League began by using a Slack channel for relaying information about the Transformation. If the trial proves successful, LWVMD may make Slack available to LWVAAC and other local Leagues.

Fundraising, Niecy Chambers, Alexis Dorsey, Marg Duffy, Delia Scott, Alfa Stevens, Amanda SubbaRao

Education Fund: LWVAAC's fundraising drive for the 2023-24 fiscal year took place in May 2024 after the 2024 Annual Meeting. The annual appeal celebrated LWVAAC's 80th anniversary of providing nonpartisan voter services in Anne Arundel County. The



mailer was printed on an extra-long sheet of paper with a tear-off return form. The fundraising committee stuffed, hand-addressed and stamped over 140 envelopes with a commemorative stamp honoring Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The drive raised a record \$4,718, thanks in part to a \$1,000 gift in memory of NASA astronaut and LWVAAC member Mary Cleave. Many thanks to our generous Education Fund supporters!

A fundraiser for LWVAAC's Education Fund will be mailed before the end of the 2024-25 fiscal year. The theme and date have not been decided. Donations to the Education Fund are tax-deductible.

General Fund: LWVAAC continues to advertise and sell the branded canvas tote bags that we introduced in 2024. The totes are available for sale online and at events for \$15 each.

The LWVAAC Board will continue to monitor the impact of the LWVUS Transformation on General Fund income. Some League initiatives, such as subsidizing dues for student members, may be unaffordable without outside support. In the future, it may be necessary to seek sponsors for specific programs or look for other revenue sources. While not tax-deductible, contributions to LWVAAC's General Fund are always welcome and will be applied to achieving the League's mission.



Save the Date

ANNUAL RETREAT

Juneteenth Thursday, 6/19/25, 6 to 8 p.m.

Glory Days Grill, 3 Lee Airpark Drive, Edgewater

Watch your email for details. Questions? Contact Alexis at vp@lwvaacmd.org.

The League of Women Voters of Anne Arundel County invites you to participate in a discussion of *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* by Maria Ressa.

Date: Thursday, May 22, 2025

Time: 2:30 to 4:00 p.m.

Place: Busch Annapolis Library, 1410 West Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Ressa is a renowned international journalist and Nobel Peace Prize winner. The book is a personal memoir and a portrait of a country's struggles to battle the forces of populism and social media in the Philippines. Through her own experience, Ressa seeks to understand the rise of authoritarianism around the world and to offer ways to fight back.

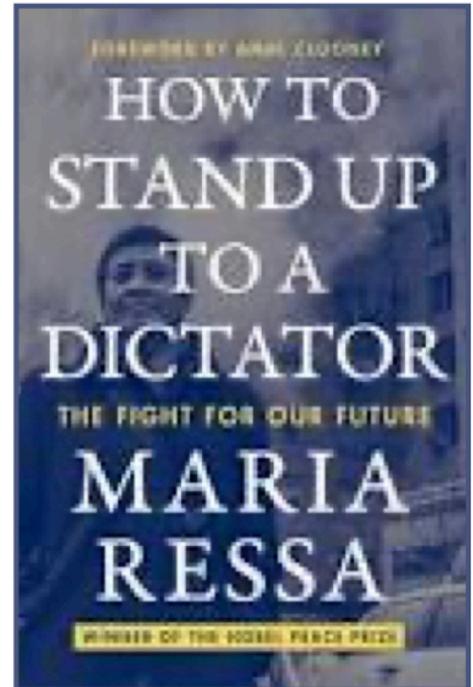
Ressa is the co-recipient of the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize for her work defending freedom of expression and



democracy. She is the CEO, co-founder, and president of Rappier, the Philippines' top digital news site. Ressa has been a journalist in Asia for over 36 years. She was Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 2018. In 2021, she won the UNESCO World Press Freedom Prize. Ressa

grew up in the Philippines and the United States and currently lives in Manila.

Cynthia Barry, Anne Arundel County College adjunct faculty and LWVAAC member, will moderate the discussion. *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* is available at county public libraries.



RSVP:
[lwvaacmd.org/
bks5_22_25](https://lwvaacmd.org/bks5_22_25)