



The League of Women Voters<sup>®</sup>  
of the Fairfax Area

Presents ~

In Honor of Its  
60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a League  
April 15, 2008

# Historical Milestones

60 Years Strong & Needed Now More Than Ever

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*Historical Milestones 2008* was prepared by the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA) with funding provided through the LWVFA Education Fund.

Many thanks to Bernice Colvard, League Historian, and Janey George, 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee Chair, for their contributions to this publication and to the “60 Years Exhibit” that accompanies it.

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

*Membership in the League is open to men and women of all ages. With more than 88 years of experience, the League is one of America's most trusted grassroots organizations.*

## THE LEAGUE

### **1940s**

- As required for a provisional League, we spent two years thoroughly familiarizing ourselves with the operational procedures of our local government to participate as informed, active citizens.
- League compared the Fairfax voter registration list with the state's poll tax list and notified residents, who had paid their poll taxes but were not shown in the registrar's book. This led to changes in registration procedures.
- The League developed the first precinct-voting map in Fairfax. This was later taken over by local government.
- League began working on a proposed Master Plan for development in Fairfax. It was soon outpaced by actual events.
- On April 15, 1948, we received our charter as an official local League of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS). It was signed by LWVUS President Anna Lord Strauss.

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### **1950s**

- The League worked alone and with coalitions to advocate a change in the form of county government.
- 1952 brought redistricting. League produced *A Guide to Fairfax County Government*, later published by the county as the *Citizens Handbook*.
- Education has always been of paramount importance to League. We joined a coalition to support building a local high school for black students, who were being bused to Manassas or D.C. Luther Jackson High School in Merrifield was completed in 1954.
- The rest of the decade and most of the next were devoted primarily to keeping our public schools open and maintaining an orderly transition to desegregation to thwart Virginia's "massive resistance" plan.

## THE DECADE

- World War II ended in 1945 and Fairfax County's transition from a rural, mostly dairy, region to an urban area speeded up
- Completion of the Pentagon and Shirley Hwy. led to heavy population concentration in fringe areas of D.C. Numbers swelled from 40,000 in 1940 to 100,000 in 1950 in Fairfax County.
- The public school population exploded.
- Fairfax County initiated Public Works "to protect the general health, safety, and welfare of residents" and provide sewer and water services.
- There was a large increase in public library services.
- With planning comes zoning, and this process was begun.

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- A special County Executive form of government was adopted in 1950 for Fairfax County. This is more moderate than a county manager form, first proposed, but still effectively separates administrative from legislative functions, handled by the Board of Supervisors (BOS).
- By 1953, 90 percent of county workers were employed by the federal government.
- Also in 1953, the circuit court established seven magisterial districts, making the BOS number uneven and eliminating the need for a hired tiebreaker.
- Seven Corners Shopping Center was developed (1953) beginning the drastic change in shopping patterns between the county and D.C.
- A two-year branch of George Mason University started.
- By 1958, the Beltway and Fairfax Hospital were under construction.
- The U.S. Supreme Court *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, desegregating public schools, occurred in 1954. The state of Virginia adopted a policy of "massive resistance" to that ruling.

THE LEAGUE

**1960s**

- The League continued to focus on maintenance and improvement of our free public school system and the orderly implementation of racial integration.
- After state poll taxes were prohibited in federal elections in 1964, League mounted a huge voter registration drive. We ran a week-long Voters Service booth at 7 Corners and a highly visible "Votes-wagon" around the county. Registrars were swamped.
- League supported the county's anti-annexation suits against Falls Church and Alexandria but the try for city status [of Fairfax County] was lost.
- We championed the county's new erosion and sedimentation control ordinance, later adopted by the state.
- In 1961, the Town of Fairfax was chartered as a City and in 1964, we became the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area, covering both jurisdictions.

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**1970s**

- The League studied and developed positions on which to act on virtually all facets of the public school system. We supported many bond issues for school construction.
- We worked on and supported the county's Planned Land Use System (PLUS).
- In 1973, League's Jean Packard was elected as the first person and the first woman Chairman-At-Large of the BOS.
- At the 1974 national convention, men were first admitted as League members, but we retained our name as the League of Women Voters.
- During this period, we inspected the judicial system quite thoroughly through 16 separate studies and presented our conclusions to the county, which published a courts brochure for the public and made several changes in the system advocated by League.
- League's signature publication, *Facts for Voters*, appeared in the distinctive red, white, and blue "step-down" format in 1977.

THE DECADE

- This decade was dominated by civil rights.
- Among many provisions, the federal 1964 Civil Rights Act disallowed charging state poll taxes in years of federal elections, effectively killing the tax.
- Exploding population escalated demands for public services in Fairfax, including an integrated water/sewer system, schools, parks, libraries, and police and fire services.
- 1968 saw the proper adjustment to the congressional record showing Virginia's ratification of woman's suffrage, passed by the General Assembly in 1952- 32 years after it had been added to the U.S. Constitution.

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- A huge new wave of population engulfed Fairfax, once again severely impacting all public services, notably the school system. The most immediate and obvious effect was a huge increase in the number of school buses. The school system continues to run the largest fleet in the nation.
- 1973 saw the cut-off of oil exports from the Mideast to industrialized nations. Long gas lines and panic ensued. The public became keenly interested in energy conservation and alternative energy sources for a time.
- The county developed a comprehensive approach to land use, called a Planned Land Use System (PLUS).

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## THE LEAGUE

### **1980s**

- The League conducted very successful Energy House Tours in 1981 and 1983 to show the efficacy of solar energy to the public.
- During the first National Women's History celebration in 1982, League dedicated the historic roadside marker on Rt. 123, honoring the suffragists held at the Occoquan Workhouse in 1917 for picketing the White House for the vote. Later, we published *Remember the Ladies...* telling the suffragists' story at the Workhouse.
- League entered into a first-in-Virginia *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief supporting the county's "down zoning" in the Occoquan Watershed to protect public drinking water.
- League joined AHOME, a coalition seeking solutions to the increasing loss of affordable housing in Fairfax.
- League charter member, Dorothy McDiarmid, was the first female Virginia state Delegate to chair the powerful House Appropriations Committee (1986).
- Former League President Vivian Watts became Virginia's first Secretary of Transportation & Public Safety in the Governor's cabinet (1986) and the only person to hold this combined post for four years.
- In 1989, we published our first *Recycling Guide* and filled requests for copies all over the U.S. from Alaska to Puerto Rico. After we printed a second edition, the county took over this task.
- With growing population and traffic congestion, League put great effort into supporting mass transit.

### **1990s**

- League began a Special Collection in George Mason University's archives.
- The City of Fairfax Museum hosted a special exhibit celebrating the 75th anniversary of the League of Women Voters of the U.S. and covering the Fairfax League.
- A League exhibit board, featuring "Modern Pioneer Women in No. VA" rotated among our public libraries.
- League introduced voting information on our website with links to Virginia's State Board of Elections [SBE] and to our *Voters Guides*. The county later took over the expanded voting information segment.

## THE DECADE

- The country's concerns about energy conservation carried over to this decade.
- The county "down zoned" about 40,000 acres to protect the Occoquan Reservoir, drinking water source for over 600,000 Northern Virginians. The circuit court upheld this action.
- The county's Economic Development Authority was instructed to aggressively pursue the goal of attracting hi-tech companies, national headquarters, and government-related businesses to raise the business tax base to 25%. By 1987 Fairfax County ranked as one of the nation's major business centers.
- Rising property values exacerbated a dwindling supply of affordable housing for many persons employed in Fairfax County.
- Public facilities, most notably roads, were being overwhelmed.
- The combining of Virginia's Departments of Transportation & Public Safety under one Secretary was short-lived. After the tenure of Vivian Watts, they were divided into discrete positions.

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- "Motor Voter" federal legislation, simplifying voter registration, became a reality.
- The General Assembly approved a change in state law allowing split shifts of poll workers, a change championed by the League.
- Deregulation of electricity occurred in Virginia.
- Legislative redistricting again occurred. Our state legislative delegation rose to 7 senators and 18 delegates. Quite a contrast with 1940's one senator and one delegate.

## THE LEAGUE

*1990s cont'd:*

- League was involved with forums on elected school boards and later, on health care.
- We worked with candidates' forums for a first-ever elected Fairfax County School Board.
- Former League President Leslie Byrne became Virginia's first woman elected to the U.S. Congress (1991).
- League's history, *Tracing Our Roots*, was published (1997).

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## **2000s**

- On a national basis, League took another look at the Electoral College and concluded again it is archaic and inappropriate.
- League looked closely at voting procedures and equipment in Fairfax and Virginia.
- League sponsored a panel of experts to discuss the Patriot Act and our political freedoms.
- League co-sponsored a CEDAW (U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Forum on this treaty.
- League members served as Court Watchers, who observed and completed surveys on domestic violence cases with website reports to members and emails to Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court Judges.
- "Sixty years strong and needed now more than ever" became the theme for Fairfax League's 60th anniversary in 2008.
- League is now supporting affordable homes for the area's middle class work force.
- League looked at Cool Counties initiatives to deal with climate change.
- We studied the complexities of growing immigration.
- League supported redistricting in Virginia by a bipartisan panel.

## THE DECADE

*1990s cont'd:*

- Actions of the 1992 BOS virtually disabled the new Comprehensive Plan for development, as well as the Chesapeake Bay Ordinance, both League supported.
- Solid waste disposal appears to be a success story for the 90s. Both Fairfax County and City started curbside pickup of recyclables and advances continue to be made on this front.

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- Transition to the new millennium (Y2K) went smoothly around the world.
- The U.S. was stunned on September 11, 2001, when terrorists crashed into the World Trade Center in NYC and the Pentagon, and downed an airliner in PA. Death and destruction followed in their wake.
- "9/11" was quickly followed by passage of the federal Patriot Act, raising questions about curtailing civil rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.
- McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform became law (2002).
- Federal No Child Left Behind Act (2001) passed – to raise reading and math scores in the nation's schools.
- The federal HAVA (Help America Vote Act) became law after the debacles of the 2000 presidential election.
- March 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq.
- U.S. "intervention" in Afghanistan continues.
- Global warming, leading to climate change, has taken center stage in our concerns.
- A burgeoning immigrant population has brought complex issues to local, state and national attention.
- Escalating oil prices have again caught worldwide attention.
- Proposed legislative redistricting reforms became a hot issue in the Virginia General Assembly.
- Efforts were made in the 2008 General Assembly Session to require localities to charge developers/builders set flat fees in lieu of the proffer system.