

Fairfax VOTER

May 2023

Volume 75, Issue 9

Primary Elections: Are They Important?

Primary elections have far-reaching effects. Too many Americans think that they only need to pay attention to candidates in the Presidential election every four years. It is in primary elections and caucuses that the candidates are chosen. This is your chance to have direct participation to choose candidates who conform to your ideas and principles. Virginia has November elections every year. This year, Virginians will choose constitutional officers and the full Virginia Senate and House of Delegates. In Fairfax County, we also have elections for school board and soil and water district representatives. Paying attention to candidates in the primaries is essential.

Calendar

May 2023

- Note: LWVFA Unit Meetings will meet in May
- 1-3 Asian Pacific-American Heritage Month
 - 3 Fairfax Voter Deadline for the June 2023 issue
 - 6 LWNCA Annual Convention, 9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
 - 6 LWVFA Briefing and At-Large Meeting, 10 a.m.
 - 8-11 LWVFA Unit Meetings at various locations around Fairfax County
 - 17 LWVFA Board Meeting, 10 a.m.
 - 23 LWVFA Legacy Committee Meeting 2:00 p.m.

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Presidents' Message

Dear Fellow Leaguers,

Thank you so much to everyone who attended our Annual Meeting and Anniversary Tea in April. Can you believe we are 75? (We don't look a day over 30...) It was wonderful to see so many of you, both old friends and new. And a huge welcome to our new and returning Board Members and Directors. Thank you for your service and your commitment to our mission.

Our May discussion on Primaries should be lively, and is certainly timely. We hope you will emerge energized to encourage everyone to participate in their primary elections, regardless of party. Especially in areas where one party may be dominant, the primaries are often where the real action is, for better or worse.

As the school year winds down and we prepare for summer, please start thinking how you can help pitch in with our many projects during this election year.

Pat and Katherine



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR COMMUNITY ELECTION

McLean Community Center Election

Thursday, May 18 1-5:30 p.m.

Validating Affidavits from Early Voting

Saturday, May 20 10:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

(Multiple shifts)

McLean Day: Election Officers

Evening: Vote Counters

Please sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0d48afa82fa7f94-mclean7#/>
or via the League website

Questions? Contact Susan Cowart,
sfcowart@aol.com, 703-893-2229 (H) or
703-915-3444 (C)

Much needed funds for League activities are raised running these elections and it is fun to meet other League members!

Fairfax County 24-hr.
Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline:
703-360-7273; 711 TTY

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2022 - 2023

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Please e-mail address corrections to the office
or call 703-658-9150.

HIGHLIGHTING A “NEW” LWVFA MEMBER Sheryl Williams

Edited by Julia Jones from an interview form completed by Sheryl

Sheryl Williams officially joined LWVFA in September, 2022. However, she started volunteering with LWVFA in September 2020. Sheryl’s main interest is in voter registration. Currently, she is preparing to become a presenter for LWVFA high school voter registration events.

As she wrote, “Being a League member has enabled me to meet incredibly smart and accomplished women who are passionate about the LWVFA mission. Practicing as an attorney made me comfortable advocating for and defending LWVFA voter registration issues. My litigation experience enabled me to feel comfortable volunteering to present during high school voter registration events.”

Sheryl was born and grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. In her words, she was “always willing to speak up to address issues that were unfair, which led to me being dubbed “the debater” while in my freshman year of high school. My inability to turn a blind eye to unfairness/injustice probably led to me being elected Student Council President of my high school and choosing law as a career.”

She completed her undergraduate studies at Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, IA; received a law degree from Washington University School of Law in St. Louis, MO; received an advanced law degree from The Judge Advocate General’s School of the Army in Charlottesville, VA; and received a Master’s Degree from the U.S Army War College in Carlisle, PA. Sheryl chose to become an attorney so that she could help others.

She is a retired 30-year federal employee and worked as a supervisory attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Transportation, and the Office of the General Counsel of the Navy. She is also a retired U.S. Marine Colonel Judge Advocate (Attorney). As the first African American Marine Corps female reserve Colonel Judge Advocate, Sheryl spent 30 years in the Marine Corps, both on active duty and in the reserves.

Sheryl moved to this area because of her husband’s job. She has also lived in San Diego, CA; Jacksonville, NC; and Okinawa, Japan. She has one son. Besides her League activities, her other activities include advocating for the rights of young people. Her desire to mentor young people led her to volunteer

with Big Brothers Big Sisters and to become a volunteer mentor in a Fairfax County high school. She is also the PTSA Chair, Food Pantry and Food Insecurity Issues, at Edison High School in Alexandria.

She enjoys traveling with her family, biking, hiking, and competing in running races. Her future plans are to continue enjoying life to the fullest. “The accomplishments that give me the greatest satisfaction are having a loving family and good friends, and being able to use my God-given talents to help make the world a better place.”



LWVFA MEMBERS ARE READERS

During the March 2023 unit meetings, LWVFA members discussed books that they chose to read. All groups reported lively and enlightening discussions. Some units picked one book (ex. *Robert E. Lee and Me* by Ty Seidule and *Fascism: A Warning* by Madeleine Albright). “We liked the fact that each unit could choose its own book (and the GSP unit used ranked choice voting to decide!). Other groups had members select their own book and give a review and summary of that book. All units reported that reading a book and discussing it was a tradition that LWVFA should continue.

There was disagreement on whether LWVFA should form a book club as an interest group. Some felt “not another book group, I belong to two already.” A few would join a group, if it met virtually, a few times a year, and maybe in the summer. The members who indicated interest will be contacted to see if a group can be formed. There was some interest in having an ongoing column in the Fairfax *VOTER* reviewing a book that would interest our members. There were many book suggestions for the future. Here are a few:

- *The Agitators: Three Friends Who Fought for Abolition and Women’s Rights*, by Dorothy Wickenden
- *Fuzz: When Nature Breaks the Law*, by Mary Roach
- *Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival & Hope in an American City*, by Andrea Elliott
- *Desegregation in Northern Virginia Libraries*, by Chris Barbuschak and Suzanne S. LaPierre
- *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, by Matthew Desmond

Fairfax Budget 2024 Testimony
Fairfax County League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters is a grass roots non-partisan organization that cares deeply about elections, voting and civic engagement.

We are submitting testimony in overall support of the FY 2024 Fairfax County proposed budget, with a focus on elections services, strong support for sustainable compensation for FCPS teachers, school staff and county employees. We acknowledge the challenge of balancing the need for investment in the broad range of services that the county must provide against the unpredictability of our revenue stream and tax burden in changing economic times.

Elections: The administration of free and fair elections is foundational to the function of our county governance. Ironically, the administration of these services is not free. We strongly support the county’s investment in increasing stipends for election officers and satellite election workers and the raise for the General Registrar. We are also pleased to see that the county has added a position of Assistant Absentee Manager and an IT Analyst as absentee ballots are getting increasingly popular and an important means to cast a ballot in our county. We applaud the efforts of the county to ensure the smooth running of our elections.

Compensation: The FCPS transfer includes significant investments in employee compensation which are long overdue. We are losing teachers to surrounding counties where they can receive higher pay. Quality teachers and staff are the core of the educational system that brings families to our county. These increases are necessary to restore the quality of the school system that defines our county.

Retention and recruitment of quality employees: We depend on a myriad of services from the county. These workers serve us for safety, protection, and maintenance of many essential services. It is untenable that those who provide our services often can’t afford to raise a family in our county. The current increases in compensation for school and county employees are not sufficient to correct the current problems, particularly in a time of inflation and economic change, but the budget is a move in the right direction, and we support these budget proposals.

Revenue and future planning: Responsible fiscal planning for a large county must balance the

impact of the greater economy on our residents and public servants including inflation, increased interest rates and concerns about future economic slowdowns. The proposed budget recognizes and addresses these pressures by supporting the core budget and addressing employee compensation while maintaining the actions that the board has taken to expand tax relief for the elderly and disabled, as well as tax relief on the personal property tax.

We note that these economic pressures are reflected in the budget. While there have been adjustments that allow for increases in support for services to children and the elderly (i.e. Healthy Minds Fairfax) and to meet One Fairfax objectives, these adjustments were made without any net increase in overall positions. We are disappointed and concerned that no significant investment of county funds has been made in certain county priorities, such as affordable housing and environmental and energy projects. While we understand that there is a finite amount of resources available to the county, we do worry that this is being dangerously short sighted. We hope that the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive take steps to rectify.



The LWV-Virginia Convention

Make plans to attend the 41st Biennial LWV-VA Convention in Williamsburg, June 2-4, 2023

The theme is *Preserving Democracy in the 21st Century*

The deadline to register for the Convention is May 24 and the final day to reserve a room at the discounted rate is May 16

For full details, visit the LWV-VA Convention page under the Events tab on our website www.lwv-fairfax.org

For reimbursement information and to serve as a delegate, contact co-presidents, Katherine and Pat, at league@lwv-fairfax.org by May 14

Domestic Violence: What Do You Know? Why Should You Care?

Domestic Violence, Firearms, and Mass Shootings

By Adarsh Trehan
Chair, Domestic Violence Committee

Mass shootings inflict death, grief, and fear in all communities where they occur. There are mass shootings happening many weeks in a year, every week in some American city or town, and no city or town is safe or immune.

There is a tragic relationship between domestic violence, guns, and mass shootings. Mass shooters often talk about their past inflictions of violence against women after they are arrested. An Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of mass shooting incidents—in which four or more people are shot and killed, not including the shooter—in the United States from 2009 to 2020, revealed that in at least 53 percent of these incidents, the perpetrator shot a current or former intimate partner or family member.

“While research examining the connections between IPV (intimate partner violence), misogyny, and mass shootings is limited, analysis of recent mass shootings indicates shooters often had histories of IPV, stalking, or harassment. Intimate partner firearm homicide is also connected with gun suicide: a study of mass shootings in the United States from 2014 to 2019 found that more than half of all domestic violence related mass shootings ended with a perpetrator dying by firearm suicide, and it is not uncommon for abusers who threaten or commit gun violence against their partners or children to end up dying by firearm suicide.”

Aside from mass shootings, intimate partner violence and the use of guns by abusers to kill their partners negatively affects family members, co-workers, employers, and the communities of the victims.

According to research by Everytown for Gun Safety, there are over 800 women a year who die as a result of an intimate partner’s uses of a firearm against them. “In addition, nearly two-third of intimate partner homicides in the United States are committed with a gun, and 80 percent of intimate partner firearm homicide victims are women.”

It is unfortunate that this trend is only increasing, as shown by this sobering statistic: “Over the 10-year period from 2011 to 2020, there was a six percent increase in intimate partner homicides

of women. This trend was driven by homicides with guns, which increased by 15 percent. During the same period, female intimate partner homicides by all other means decreased by four percent.”

“Abusers exploit guns to exert power and control over their partners. Over 4.5 million women in the United States today report having been threatened with a gun by an intimate partner. In a 2018 survey of victim calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, over one-third of callers reported being threatened with a gun, and over three-fourths of those who experienced such threats reported their partner also stalked them. Stalking, a form of intimidation and control, is a predictor of lethality in intimate partner relationships. One study found that 76 percent of intimate partner homicides and 85 percent of attempted homicides of women were preceded by at least one incident of stalking in the year before the attack.”

Children are also deeply affected and are “permanently damaged.” “Between 2009 and 2020, nearly three in four children and teens killed in mass shooting incidents involving four or more deaths died in an incident connected to domestic violence. Data drawn from 16 states indicate that nearly two-thirds of child fatalities involving domestic violence were caused by guns. There is also ample evidence that children who survive and witness the death of a parent from IPV suffer life-altering consequences, including severe PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), behavioral problems, and suicidal thoughts.”

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-and-violence-against-women-americas-unique-ly-lethal-intimate-partner-violence-problem>



Primaries and Why They are Important

This article describes the various types of primaries, the offices on the 2023 Fairfax County and City of Fairfax primary election ballots and why primaries are important. It was compiled by Julia Jones with edits by Judy Helein, Judy Smith, Maggi Luca, Pat Fege, and Arina van Breda.

Many voters are unaware of the importance of voting in every election and often primary elections are overlooked. Someone once described primaries as “the election before the election.” The act of voting is an opportunity for choosing the person who most resembles the voter’s own belief system. If you think that your opinion and your vote doesn’t matter, think again! The people in office now are making decisions that will affect your life now and later!

A primary election is an election used either to narrow the field of candidates for a given elective office or to determine the nominees for political parties in advance of a general election. Primary elections can take several different forms. In a partisan primary, voters select a candidate to be a political party’s nominee for a given office in the corresponding general election. Nonpartisan primaries are used to narrow the field of candidates for nonpartisan offices in advance of a general election. The terms of participation (e.g., whether only registered party members can vote in a party’s primary) can vary by jurisdiction, political party and the office or offices up for election. The methods employed to determine the outcome of the primary can also vary by jurisdiction. ballotpedia.org

How do primaries work in Virginia?

Virginia has nonpartisan registration, meaning you don’t have the option to affiliate with a political party when registering to vote. The political parties have the right to nominate candidates by the method they choose. Virginia state law provides for open primary elections, meaning that a voter does not have to be registered with a party in advance in order to participate in its primary. Winners in primary elections are determined by plurality vote. [Virginia Code]

A primary election is an election in which registered voters select a candidate that they believe should be a political party’s candidate for elected office to run in the general election. Primaries are state-level and local-level elections that take place prior to a general election.

Each political party determines the method for nominating their candidates. If both political parties select

a primary, each party will have a distinct ballot, and the election results will be reported by party. Voters may vote in only one open primary. (In this June 20 primary election, it is expected that there will be a Democratic primary in every precinct and a Republican primary in about 100 precincts). Some political parties choose not to have primary elections, but instead choose to have a mass meeting, party canvass, convention, or caucus. Only members of the party may attend and vote. The number and manner of choosing delegates is up to the party. The candidates still must follow the same rules as outlined on the Board of Election website.

What is a firehouse primary?

It is also known as a mass canvass, party canvass or unassembled caucus - a type of primary election run and paid for by a political party instead of a state’s department of elections. A firehouse primary in Virginia is practically synonymous with any kind of special primary election for state or national office that occurs outside of a November general election. No actual firehouses are usually used as normal voting venues.

Is there a primary for all offices?

If there is only one candidate or no candidate for a political party, there will not be a primary.

Candidates for the School Board and the Soil and Water Conservation District run as independents and, therefore, are not nominated by primary.

What changes has redistricting made to primary elections?

Historically, legislative lines were drawn by which ever party was in power in the General Assembly, and those lines were specifically drawn to benefit that party and hurt the other one. Both Democrats and Republicans were equally adept at drawing weirdly shaped districts for political purposes — what we know as gerrymandering.

Due to Virginia’s recent redistricting, many elected officials may have had the boundaries of their districts changed. Some candidates retired, others need to run in a new or newly redrawn district, often against members of their own party. This results in the need for a primary so that that the parties can decide on a single candidate.

Could Rank Choice Voting increase voting in primaries?

A ranked-choice voting system (RCV) is an elec-

toral system in which voters rank candidates by preference on their ballots. If a candidate wins a majority of first-preference votes, he or she is declared the winner. If no candidate wins a majority of first-preference votes, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated. First-preference votes cast for the failed candidate are eliminated, lifting the next-preference choices indicated on those ballots. A new tally is conducted to determine whether any candidate has won a majority of the adjusted votes. The process is repeated until a candidate wins an outright majority. [https://ballotpedia.org/Ranked-choice_voting_\(RCV\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Ranked-choice_voting_(RCV))

Ranked choice voting encourages greater civility and less negative campaigning among candidates, as well as more direct outreach by candidates to voters. RCV encourages a greater number of candidates with more diverse backgrounds and views to run for office. Ranked-choice voting reveals the candidate with the most support across the *entire electorate*, not just the most passionate base. Once there's more than two candidates in a typical "most votes wins" election, it's very easy for the "winner" to have a weak plurality of support. It's entirely possible that the winning candidate only commands 38% of the vote when a majority of the electorate would have preferred someone else. Voters no longer have to play pundit when voting — gaming out who is the most electable and then strategically voting for that candidate. Instead, voters rank their most preferred candidate without fear of wasting their vote. The Arlington County Board has officially approved a trial run of ranked choice voting in the 2023 primary election of local county board seats, becoming the first locality in Virginia to adopt the voting method.

When are primary candidates announced?

April 11, 2023 is the date scheduled for the final announcement of the qualified candidates to be on the appropriate primary ballots. You can check the Virginia Department of Elections website. <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/candidatepac-info/index.html> for the latest list of candidates. You can also confirm your precinct using the Department of Elections Citizen Portal <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation>

What are important dates for citizens to register and cast primary ballots?

Voter Registration Deadline, online or by mail: May 30

Voter Registration Deadlines, in Person.

Through May 30: Register at the Fairfax County Office of Elections.

May 31 - June 17: Voters may register at an early voting location (I believe early voting starts on May 5 in both Fairfax County and Fairfax City). On June 20 election day, voters may only register at the precinct in which they reside and *VOTER* will cast a provisional ballot.

Last Day to Request a Vote by Mail Absentee Ballot: June 9 by 5 p.m.

Deadline for Return of Vote by Mail Absentee Ballots:

June 20 by 7 p.m. if hand-delivered in person or by drop-box.

Postmarked on or before June 20 and received by noon on June 23.

- **Early Voting in Person: Begins May 5, ends June 17**
- **ELECTION DAY JUNE 20 PRIMARY DAY**

Who can run for office?

Candidates must be 18 years old, resident of Virginia for at least a year, and reside and be registered to vote in the district they wish to represent. At-large members may reside anywhere in the county. Candidates for office must meet certain qualifications and are required to file specific documents in order to qualify to appear on the ballot. These qualifications and requirements may vary slightly depending on whether the office sought is a local office, a general assembly seat, a statewide office, or a federal office.

OFFICES to be elected on November 7, 2023

Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax will be electing:

- Member, Virginia Senate
- Member, Virginia House of Delegates
- Commonwealth's Attorney*
- Sheriff*
- Clerk of Court*

In addition, Fairfax County residents will vote for Chairman, Board of Supervisors
Member, Board of Supervisors (one per each of nine magistral districts)
Members, School Board at Large (3)**
Member, School Board**

Soil and Water Conservation Director (3)**

*The Constitutional Officers (Commonwealth's Attorney, Clerk of Court and Sheriff) are shared with the City of Fairfax.

**Candidates for School Board and Soil and Water Conservation Directors run as independents, and, therefore, are not nominated by primary elections.

Local candidates are required to pay a primary filing fee to the Director of Finance in the county in which they reside. The filing fee is 2% of the minimum annual salary for the office sought in effect for the year in which the candidate files. (Code of Virginia). They are also required to have a certain number of petitions signed by registered voters. Below is a list of the salaries and fees required.

2023 Primary Election Filing Fees for Fairfax County Candidates - State and Local Candidates ONLY

Office Sought	Base Salary	Primary Election Filing Fee	Certified Voter Signatures Needed
Virginia Senate	\$18,000	\$360.00	250
House of Delegates	\$17,640	\$352.80	125
Clerk of Court	\$140,230	\$2,804.60	125
Commonwealth's Attorney	\$139,958	\$2,799.16	125
Sheriff	\$142,447	\$2,848.94	125
Board of Supervisors*	\$95,000	\$1,900.00	125
Chairman of the Board of Supervisors*	\$100,000	\$2,000.00	125
School Board	\$32,000	N/A	125
Soil and Water Commission	\$0	N/A	25

*As of March 22, 2023 The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors will get its first salary increase in eight years, starting next January. The current board voted 8-2 to raise the pay to \$123,283 for a supervisor position and to \$138,283 for the chairman. By law, the supervisors can raise their salaries only every four years and only in an election year.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY - Senators and Delegates

All members are elected by voters within his/her district. Members may not hold any other elected public office during their term, must be at least 21 years of age at the time of election, reside in the district they represent, be qualified to vote for members of the General Assembly, and be a resident of Virginia for the year preceding election. If a member moves from his/her district, he/she must vacate the office. There are no term limits.

Powers and Responsibilities: The bicameral legislature works alongside the Governor to create laws and establish a state budget. Legislative authority and responsibilities include passing bills on public policy matters, setting levels for state spending, raising and lowering taxes, and voting to uphold or override gubernatorial vetoes. Members are responsible for representing the citizens of their districts. Members elect the judges that serve the Commonwealth in the various levels of the judiciary. Finally, all legislators serve the people of their district throughout the year, assisting their constituents with various public services at the local, state, and federal levels of government.

The Virginia House of Delegates consists of 100 members. There are currently 17 Delegate Districts in Fairfax County. Each Delegate is elected for a two-year term and all terms begin and end at the same time.

The Senate of Virginia consists of 40 members. There are currently nine Senate Districts in Fairfax County. Each Senator is elected for a four-year term and all terms begin and end at the same time.

THE COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY (In other states, the prosecutor is called district attorney (DA) or state's attorney).

Powers and Responsibilities: The Office of the Fairfax Commonwealth's Attorney is charged primarily with the prosecution of crimes that occur in Fairfax County and felonies that occur in Fairfax City and the Towns of Herndon and Vienna (misdemeanor criminal and traffic offenses are prosecuted locally). The Office prosecutes both the violation of County ordinances and the violation of state statutes.

The prosecutors decide what criminal charges to bring and when and where a person will answer to those charges. In carrying out their duties, prosecutors have the authority to investigate persons, grant immunity to witnesses and accused criminals, and plea bargain with defendants.

The Commonwealth's Attorney is elected for a four-year term, is not term-limited, and is a full-time job. The candidate must be an attorney, at least 18 years old, a resident of Virginia for at least a year, and reside and be registered to vote in the district they wish to represent.

THE OFFICE OF SHERIFF

Powers and Responsibilities: Though the Office of the Sheriff provides many different services, its primary obligations are to:

- Operate and manage the Adult Detention Center (ADC)
- Provide security for the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts and the Fairfax County Judicial Center as well as courts in the towns of Vienna, Herndon, and the City of Fairfax. This includes security for judges, staff, and visitors.
- Process, service, and execute legal documents on individuals and businesses in civil matters on behalf of the court in Fairfax County and in the towns of Vienna, Herndon, and the City of Fairfax.
- Oversee the sale of seized vehicles.

The residents of Fairfax County, the City of Fairfax, and the towns of Herndon and Vienna elect their Sheriff every four years. There are no term limits. Candidates for the Office of Sheriff must be a resident of Virginia for one year immediately preceding the election, and a resident of and registered to vote in the county, city, or town in which they are seeking office. Most candidates have a background in police work.

CLERK OF COURT

Powers and Responsibilities: The Code of Virginia lists over 800 responsibilities and duties for the Clerk, many of which are legally sophisticated and highly complex. (VCCA – Virginia Court Clerks Association vccaonline.org) The variety of duties include the following: public safety, court services, recorder of deeds, probate judge, custodian of court cases, public services, preservation of historic records, keeper of election ballots and law library maintenance.

The clerk shall develop, implement and administer procedures necessary for the efficient operation of the clerk's office, keep the records and accounts of the court, supervise nonjudicial personnel and discharge such other duties as may be prescribed by the judge. The Clerk of Court serves an 8 year term and is on the ballot every 8 years.

FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

Powers and Responsibilities: The Board sets general policy, establishes guidelines, addresses school

boundary changes, and makes decisions on student discipline issues. The School Board hires and evaluates the performance of the Superintendent, and adopts operating and capital budgets. It reports regularly to the community on student achievement, operational goals and challenges, and initiatives to improve achievement and effectiveness of the division. In addition, the School Board ensures that FCPS responds respectfully and in a timely manner to issues raised by parents, guardians, and members of the community.

The board is composed of 12 members, nine representatives of districts and three members at large. They serve a four-year term with no term limits and are considered part-time. A student representative, selected for a one-year term by the Student Advisory Council, sits with the Board at all public meetings and participates in discussions, but does not vote. Candidates must be at least 18 years old, resident of Virginia for at least a year, and reside and be registered to vote in the district they wish to represent. At-large members may reside anywhere in the county.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Powers and Responsibilities: Soil and water conservation district directors promote conservation and provide technical expertise to Fairfax County residences free of charge. "Our vision is engaged communities working together to protect and restore natural resources. Our mission is to promote sustainable urban and suburban activities and stewardship to conserve our soil, water, air, plants, and animal resources in Fairfax County - vital components of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed." Three directors are elected every four years with no term limits. Two additional directors are appointed by the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board. The two appointed directors must be qualified and experienced. One will be the county extension agent. The other appointed and the elected district directors must reside within the boundaries of the district. The board members are part-time and non-salaried.

WHY PRIMARIES ARE IMPORTANT

The following is part an interview with Andrea Benjamin of the University of Oklahoma, by Rhyma Castillo for the May 16, 2022 edition in Elite Daily www.elitedaily.com.

"Primary elections just aren't on peoples' radar. We need to create spaces where people can get the information they need to cast their vote. The primary elections are very important in the larger election process. Hypothetically, someone could be the best candidate, but if they can't make it past the primary

elections, they can't compete in the general election."

In general elections, most people vote along party lines. That's why it's so important for more people to participate in primaries — if only a few voters have expressed support for a candidate, that's now the only person that's gonna show up on everyone's ballot. Let's say, only 20% of the eligible voters participate in a given primary. That's not a lot of people determining who's going to be on the general election ballot. Primary elections are typically an opportunity for the political parties to decide who will represent them in the general election. While we mostly think about Democratic and Republican primaries, any party — Independent, Green Party, Libertarian — can have primaries as well. If a primary is "open," that means anyone, from any party, can participate in that election. If a primary is "closed," that means only registered members of the party holding the election can participate. Then there are "semi-closed" primaries, where a party holding a primary might let an Independent voter participate.

The highly partisan environment surrounding primary elections creates an incentive for candidates to adhere to party values, even for issues on which voters disagree with the party. Another factor is (many) district lines are not drawn to be competitive, because partisan powers are trying to produce Democratic or Republican results. (Virginia has a new redistricting commission tasked with drawing new district lines.)

The biggest conception people have, especially new voters, is that these elections aren't important because they don't actually elect a candidate to office. They often think, "Oh, I don't need to do that. This isn't really the election." But it is the election that determines which candidate is going to be on the ballot. So, primary elections are indeed very important. It's important to figure out, "Who do I think will do the best job representing me, should they win the actual election?" Because the more public support a candidate gets, the more funds they receive, and the candidate with the most funds tends to win. Ideally, it would mean the very best candidates are the ones that make it to the general election. . . . Even if your candidate doesn't win, political parties and candidates might decide to devote more or less attention and resources toward certain demographics, policies and issues based on voter turnout and primary results."

More information on the powers, responsibilities, qualifications and history for each of these offices was published in the Fairfax *VOTER*, September, 2019 "All About the Ballot." www.lwf-fairfax.org under the [publication tab](#).

Discussion Questions:

1. What did you find surprising in the duties of the various offices?
2. The system of Constitutional Officers dates back to Thomas Jefferson and is based on the presumption that the most important services of the government should be made directly accountable to the citizens by popular vote. Why do you think those offices were chosen? Would you pick others?
3. Do you believe the compensation for these offices is appropriate? If not, what would you change?
4. For which of these offices would you/wouldn't you consider running? Why or why not?
5. What is the advantage of holding a regular primary election? What is the disadvantage?
6. What is the advantage of holding a firehouse primary? What is the disadvantage?
7. Which type do you find most advantageous?



Be Happy and Stay Well - Volunteer

Did you know that research indicates that volunteering has health benefits? Volunteering impacts both mental and physical health. People who volunteer reported feeling a sense of meaning and appreciation as a result of helping others. This produces a stress-reducing effect. Volunteering also increases social interaction. It is a good way to make new friends and strengthen relationships with people you already know. Volunteering may lower blood pressure due to the reduction of stress and increased mobility. There is a link between volunteering and living longer. Some research findings indicate that volunteers who devote more time to volunteering are more likely to experience positive outcomes. Finally, a recent study indicates that volunteering makes people happier.

In addition to all the above benefits, League volunteers help people become involved in civic issues and become active in our democracy. This is more important than ever. Visit the Volunteer tab on our website to see all the ways you can volunteer.

Citations:

The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research, 2007

Does Volunteering Make Us Happier, or Are Happier People More Likely to Volunteer?, 2020

Unit Discussion Meeting Locations

Topic: Primaries

Members and visitor are encouraged to attend any meeting convenient for them, including the “At Large Meeting” and briefing on Saturdays when a briefing is listed. As of April 1, 2022 the following information was correct; please use phone numbers to verify sites and advise of your intent to attend. Unit meetings may be in person, virtual or hybrid. If virtual, the unit leaders will send login information to every unit member.

Saturday, May 6

10:00 a.m. At Large Meeting / Briefing – Virtual

Contact: Judy, 703-725-9401,
judithhelein@aol.com
 or Julie, 703-476-8347,
Julie.jones@lwv.fairfax.org

Monday, May 8

1:30 p.m. Greenspring (GSP) – In Person

Village Square Classroom
 (NOTE NEW LOCATION)
 7410 Spring Village Drive,
 Springfield
 Contact: Judy,
 703-342-3353
jjsmith64@earthlink.net

Tuesday, May 9

2 p.m. McLean Day (McL) – In Person

6657 Madison McLean Dr.
 Contact: Anne, 703-448-6626,
kanteratw@gmail.com

Wednesday, May 10

10 a.m. Mount Vernon Day (MVD) – In Person

Mount Vernon Government Ctr.
 2511 Parkers Lane, Mt. Vernon
 Contact: Diana, 703-704-5325,
jfdw1111@gmail.com

10 a.m. Fairfax Station (FXS) – In Person

8739 Cuttermill Pl, Springfield
 Contact: Diana, 707-866-0796,
dianawhite@gmail.com
 or Sue, 703-266-0272,
sueoneill1@hotmail.com

Thursday, May 11

9:30 a.m. Reston Day (RD) – In Person

North County Governmental Ctr.
 12000 Bowman Towne Dr.
 Reston
 Contact: Charleen,
 703-620-3593, Charleen.deasy@verizon.net

10:00 a.m. Springfield (SPF) – In Person and Virtual at Packard Center

Contact: Jane, 703-256-7834,
patchwork1@verizon.net

11:30 a.m. Centreville-Chantilly (CCD) – In Person

Lunch at Food Court, Wegman’s
 14361 Newbrook Dr, Chantilly
 Contact: Susan, 703-391-0666,
sadill@cox.net

1 p.m. Oakton/Vienna (OV) – Virtual and In Person

Oakton Public Library, 10304
 Lynnhaven Pl, Oakton
 Contact: Mary, 703-932-3665,
mmvalder@aol.com

7:30 p.m. Reston Evening (RE) – In Person

North County Governmental Ctr.
 12000 Bowman Towne Dr. Reston
 Contact: Wendy, 703-319-4114,
wendy.foxgrage@gmail.com

7:30 p.m. Mount Vernon Evening (MVE) – In Person

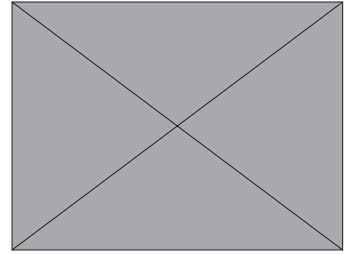
Contact: Jane, 703-960-6820,
jane@hilderwilliams.net
 or Susan, 703-587-4790,
scash5002@email.vccs.edu
 or Jane, 703-380-3651,
jmbyers@att.net

June Meetings: “Do Your Own Thing”

Attention: June will be another “Do Your Own Thing” meeting. Each unit will decide what they want to do, when, and where. The due date for publishing the “Do Your Own Thing” in the June *VOTER* is April 24. This is the same due date for publishing the regular unit meeting in the *VOTER*.



The League of Women Voters® of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA)
 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403
 703-658-9150. Web address: www.lwv-fairfax.org



**The LWVFA Fairfax VOTER®
 May, 2023**

Pat Fege, Co-President
 Katherine Ingmanson, Co-President
 Laura Hamilton, Editor

The League of Women Voters® is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the public to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any person at least 16 years old may become a member.

The League of Women Voters® never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties, and any use of the League of Women Voters® name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.

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LWVFA MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

Dues year is July 1 – June 30

Name: _____ Unit (if renewing): _____
 Name of Second Household Member (if one): _____
 Street Address: _____ Condo/Apt No: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code +4: _____
 E-mail: _____ Phone: (C) _____ (H) _____

Membership Status: _____ New _____ Renewal

Membership Level (please check one):

Basic Membership:

Individual (\$75); Household (two members who share the same mailing address) (\$100);

Limited Income (suggested donation: \$10); Student (Free!)

Membership Plus:

Suffragist (\$100); Advocate Household (two members who share the same mailing address) (\$150);

Champion (\$300); Founders' Circle (\$500)

Membership Plus levels include basic membership PLUS a donation to the LWVFA General Fund. This money will support members of limited income, help invest in LWVFA web site technology, and support other priority projects. General Fund donations are not tax deductible.

Please mail this completed form along with payment to:
 LWVFA, 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403