



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE FAIRFAX AREA

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Improvements Needed in Election Process

This month you are being treated with information dear to the heart of every Leaguer: how to improve the election process. You are probably aware that our own Olga Hernandez served on Fairfax County's 26-member Bipartisan Election Process Improvement Commission that met ten times starting in January of this year. The Commission recently came out with a host of suggestions for making sure we don't have to deal ever again locally with long lines, confused voters, or voters possibly being denied their rightful opportunity to vote. Their report has been edited and is being offered for your discussion. See if your favorite election "fix" has been addressed.

Calendar

May 2013

- 3 LWVNCA Board meeting
- 4 **Briefing and At-Large meeting**
- 4 LWVNCA Convention
- 5 Cinco de Mayo
- 6 *VOTER* deadline
- 8-14 **Units**
- 12 Mother's Day
- 15 **Board meeting**
- 18 McLean Community Center
Election
- 27 Memorial Day/FCPS holiday
- 28 Last day to register to vote for June
Primary (if necessary)
- 31 LWV-VA Board meeting

June 2013

- 1-2 LWV-VA State Convention,
Williamsburg

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Presidents' Message



We've had a busy League season with voter registration drives, the Women's Round Table, our Annual Meeting, and an April visit to our office by National League President Elisabeth McNamara.

We're looking forward to vacations, favorite summer activities and a break from some of our cool weather routines. While we anticipate a little R&R, we'll also spring forward past summer to planning the fall election season, our busiest time of year.

In 2013, the candidates for Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General plus all the representatives to the House of Delegates will be on the ballot. In coordination with the various District Councils, we are in the process of setting up candidate Meet-and Greets in as many Supervisor Districts as possible.

Participating in the event in your home district will give you a chance to meet the candidates who want to represent you in Richmond. You can also learn what they hope to accomplish if they are elected and you can ask them questions. We know from past experience that people ask pointed questions that challenge the candidates and engage the audience's full attention. We hope to see you at one of these events this coming fall.

Right now, we're looking forward to the State convention in Williamsburg. After that, we'll get back to planning visits with family and friends, summer pastimes and travel.

We wish you a relaxing transition from spring to summer. We hope your days will be filled with the people and the activities you enjoy. Whether your idea of fun is gardening, golf, outings with your grandchildren or sipping a cool drink by the pool, we hope you'll get as much of it as you crave.

We thank you for all your contributions this year. Have a great month of May.

Julie and Helen

Volunteers Needed for Community Elections - May 18 and June 12

Once again the League has an opportunity to raise funds for our operations. Volunteers are needed! Can you help us out?

McLean Community Center election is Saturday, May 18. We will need volunteers during the day at Lewinsville Park and in the evening to count ballots at the Community Center.

Skyline Plaza election will be Wednesday, June 12. We will need volunteers for several shifts all day and counting in the evening. To volunteer, call Una White, 703-644-3898

Honor an Outgoing Leader With a Gift for the League's Future & Limited Edition Pin!

Show your appreciation for an outgoing League leader with a limited edition League lapel pin and a donation to the future of the League of Women Voters in their name. You may purchase a limited-edition League lapel pin with a \$50 donation to the Fund for Local League Growth and join the hundreds of League members investing in our future.

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2012 - 2013

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

Members Indicate Preferences on March Study

“Clean, Affordable Water: Can We Count on It?”

By Bill Thomas

In March, units examined the local water suppliers and the challenges they face. The majority of county residents are served by Fairfax Water, the county's water utility. The cities of Falls Church and Fairfax have their own utilities presently. Both cities serve a number of county residents and businesses as well as their own residents. And both have agreed in principle to sell their operations to Fairfax Water. These sales must be ratified by city voters in the November 2013 elections.

Readers commended the study as being well-written. However, some units felt the treatment was rather “dry,” factual but lacking in policy focus. Indeed, with the obvious exception of the residents of Falls Church and Fairfax City who must vote on the proposal to sell their water utilities, it was not clear what role citizen involvement might contribute to water policy.

The Springfield and Fairfax/Vienna units suggested one possible extension of the study might emphasize water conservation. How can individuals and families limit their own water use and thereby preserve more capacity to meet expanding needs? Does the current pricing of water encourage conservation or wastefulness?

Some members wanted more information on regulation of water quality. Does the State of Virginia have its own standards, which may be different from those set by federal law? Which prevails if they differ? Does the State directly measure and enforce water quality standards? Or does it rely on the water utilities in the State to self-regulate?

County Election Officers Needed in June and November

Give a day to help make democracy work! Remember that there are elections every year in Virginia. This year, 2013, we will be voting in a Democratic primary in June and statewide for Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General and all members of the House of Delegates in November. Sign up now to be an election officer – 703-222-0776 at the Fairfax County Government Center. For more information go to Fairfax County's web site: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/upcoming.htm>

Fairfax/Vienna brought up the high levels of medication entering the Chesapeake Bay watershed through the sewage system. Do we understand the implications of these chemicals for wildlife and sea-life in the estuaries and streams?

Fairfax Station unit had questions about the land transfers associated with the sale of the Falls Church water utility. Are the schools in question operated by the County or by Falls Church? (Answer: they are Falls Church schools, but are located presently on County land.) What are the tax implications of the transfers? The unit's members also had questions about how we can be sure that quality standards will be maintained and customers can be encouraged to practice conservation.

Reston Day members wanted to know what the pipe replacement program along Route 7 and the Fairfax County Parkway was all about. Is it water or sewer related? They also felt pharmacies should be encouraged to participate in drug recovery programs (i.e., safely recovering unused medications). They also felt there should be better notification of any water-related problems to the public.

Members at the At-large Briefing brought up conservation involving “grey water,” that is, separating water supply into (1) potable drinking water and (2) water suitable for lawns and other uses besides drinking and bathing. Other nations and other communities where water is scarce are beginning these initiatives. Should Fairfax voters begin to study these systems?



Elisabeth McNamara, LWVUS president, joined 15 members of the Fairfax Area League for lunch on Wednesday, April 10 at the League conference room in the Packard Center. From left to right, Dianne Blais, Julie Jones, Elisabeth McNamara, Therese Martin.

Housing Choice Voucher Programs Face Hard Times

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) programs for Northern Virginia jurisdictions have been hit by the budget cuts known as sequestration, forcing local governments to rescind vouchers that had been awarded to clients who have not yet leased up, and/or possibly having to revoke vouchers used by clients currently in housing.

Nationally, approximately 140,000 households will lose access to rental subsidies, and they are among the most vulnerable in our communities. The majority of these households are made up of persons who are elderly, have special needs, are families with children and have incomes on average of \$12,500, well below the poverty line. While the number of vouchers lost in Northern Virginia due to cuts is not available at this time, it could effect hundreds of households across our region.

This federal action comes at a time when local governments, in concert with their nonprofit partners and the larger community, have made some progress in reducing homelessness through prevention strategies, diligent case management and utilization of a housing locator system that facilitates rapid rehousing. A key element of this success was the availability of vouchers to subsidize our area's high house costs. This reduction in funding is all the more shocking due to the fact that this is only the second time in the voucher program's forty year history that Congress has failed to provide adequate funding to renew all existing vouchers in use, ensuring that there would be no reduction in the number of needy families assisted. The history of the appropriation process for HCV has been consistent and bi-partisan.

LWVFA to Send Ten Delegates to State Convention in Williamsburg, June 1

Co-presidents Jones and Kelly announced that the Fairfax Area League would be permitted to send ten official delegates to this year's annual State convention scheduled June 1 – 2 in Williamsburg. "In addition, we encourage other members to accompany the delegation and take advantage of workshops planned by the state organization," stated Jones. "We are the largest League in the state and should have a large representation at the convention." Make new friends from other parts of the state and learn what they are doing and what might work here in northern VA. Workshops will held on several different topics. Please contact Rona Ackerman, Executive Assistant, at our League office if you are interested in participating either as a delegate or an observer. Plans are being made to carpool and share hotel rooms.

What are the broader implications for NoVA? Communities will have to evaluate the impact of this budget cut on their ability to make progress on their Ten Year Plans and broader affordable housing targets and goals for extremely low income and at risk populations. Those jurisdictions that relied heavily on federal dollars to fund their housing programs will now be confronted with the public costs of addressing growing unmet housing needs and a possible rise in homelessness due to inadequate investment of local dollars in affordable housing preservation and production. **Securing sufficient housing stock that is affordable to a variety of household incomes continues to be a serious, persistent regional challenge and deserves a regional response.**

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities has written an excellent summary brief on this issue which provides additional information on the broader implications of this cut. Their report can be found @ <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3945>.

[Editor's note: From a report by the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, a broad-based regional organization dedicated to the creation of successful communities through affordable housing education and advocacy.]

2013 LWV-VA Annual Convention

LOOKING FORWARD

"Part Pleasure, Part Business, All Inspiration"

Please make your own room reservation by May 10 and mention LWV-VA to get our rates. Registration fee for the Convention is \$80 on or before May 10 and \$95 after May 10. This fee includes the cost of the banquet. "The Virginia Voter" and our website will soon contain more information, including registration forms. <http://lwv-va.org/Convention2013.html>

June 1-2, 2013

Crown Plaza - Fort Magruder Hotel

6945 Pocahontas Trail

Williamsburg, VA 3185

757-220-2250

BOS Releases Report of Commission Looking at Problems Encountered During 2012 Elections

Edited By Olga Hernandez, Judith Helein, and Karole McKalip

[Ed. Note: The following is an edited version of the "Report of the Bipartisan Election Process Improvement Commission". The recommendations are in bold type. The original can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/electioncommission.]

Introduction

In response to citizen complaints about long lines and other concerns during the 2012 Election Day and to improve the election process in Fairfax County, the Board of Supervisors created the Bipartisan Election Process Improvement Commission at its November 20, 2012 meeting. The 26-member Commission comprised the Co-Chairmen, Katherine K. Hanley and Stuart Mendelsohn, and 24 members, one to represent each of the nine Supervisor election districts, two representatives appointed at-large by the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, three representatives of the disability community, and one representative each from the Fairfax County Democratic and Republican Committees, Fairfax County Public Schools, the Fairfax Bar Association, the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens' Associations, the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (Olga Hernandez), the African-American community, the Hispanic community, the Asian/Pacific Islander American community, and the Chamber of Commerce. A list of the Commission members can be found at the above website. The Commission met 10 times beginning on January 3, 2013 to identify both short-term and long-term solutions to recommend to the Board of Supervisors.

In Virginia we have an election every November. The presidential election of November 2012 saw an 80.5 percent voter turnout in Fairfax County. Voter turnout fluctuates significantly from year to year, depending what is on the ballot. In 2011, when the ballot included all members of the House of Delegates, the state Senate, constitutional officers, and most members of county boards of supervisors, school boards and some city councils, the turnout was 32.3 percent in Fairfax County. The prior year, when only one office was on the ballot, for the U.S. Congress, the turnout in Fairfax County was 49.1 percent. In the 2009 gubernatorial election, 44.6 percent of Fairfax County voters showed up to vote. Turnout is highest in presidential election years.

While planning and resource allocation should recognize the differences of each election, the voting process must accommodate all voters who wish to vote without undue delay and undue complication every year.

Issues and Recommendations

Forty-six of the 237 polling places in Fairfax County are still using paper poll books to check in voters. Paper poll books require that lines be divided alphabetically, which results in some lines being much longer than others at the same polling place. Usually, each paper poll book is staffed with two people – one to search for the voter's name and mark it off and one to keep the count sheet. Electronic Poll Books (EPBs) facilitate check-in by eliminating the need to divide voters into different lines by alphabet and by making it easier to search through the lists. EPBs also mark off the voter and keep the count, reducing the number of workers required at check-in, allowing additional staff to be available for other tasks.

Therefore the Commission recommends:

- **Every precinct should use EPBs. The Office of Elections should begin now to invest in additional EPBs so that every precinct will have at least three EPBs by the 2016 presidential election. In addition, Chief Election Officers (Chiefs) should have an independent method of checking voter issues, without taking an EPB offline.**
- **The software licenses on the current EPBs will expire soon. The way the current EPBs search for names and addresses needs to be improved. The County should investigate whether better software and hardware is available that will allow a more integrated process, including the ability to monitor the flow of voters in the precincts throughout the day.**

Complications during the voter check-in process have the effect of slowing down the entire process as well as frustrating voters. Efficient EPBs with improved search capabilities and effectively trained operators can speed the process, particularly in precincts with large numbers of hyphenated or non-traditional surnames on the voter rolls.

EPB technology will continue to evolve and the Commission recommends that all possible technologies should

be explored, considering long-term cost effectiveness.

The ability to find voters on the rolls not only speeds check-in but also reduces the number of provisional ballots issued as well as more accurately reflecting which voters have voted absentee.

The process of how to handle voters whose names are marked with a “?” needs to be clarified so that an EPB does not need to be taken out of service until the voter’s status is resolved.

A prospective voter whose name cannot be found on the list is referred to the Chief, who often must call the registrar’s office to check the statewide Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS) to confirm the voter’s identity and registration. If a Chief cannot get through to the registrar or is put on hold for 20-30 minutes, the process is again interrupted. Phone contact is also necessary in case of an equipment breakdown.

Therefore the Commission recommends that dedicated phone lines be allocated to the registrar and other forms of communications be available on Election Day, so that Election Officers can reach the Office of Elections in a timely manner. This number should be available only to Election Officers and adequate staffing should be provided to handle multiple calls at one time. Members of the public should not have access to this number. There should be a different phone number dedicated for technical support.

Fairfax County uses two different kinds of voting machines. In 2003, the County began using Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) touch screen voting machines. The Commonwealth subsequently adopted a statewide ban on future purchases of DRE equipment in the Commonwealth, although localities that used DREs were allowed to continue using them until the end of their useful lives. (In 2009, the law was amended to allow limited purchases of DREs for the express purpose of providing accessible voting equipment.) Beginning in 2008, to supplement its dwindling stock of DREs, the County acquired refurbished optical scanning voting machines, which scan paper ballots.

According to Virginia law, a voter who has checked in cannot leave the room until he/she has finished voting. During the November 2012 election, lines formed while voters waited to use the DREs. Although it was quicker to use the paper ballots and the optical scanner, most voters were

hesitant to use paper and chose to vote on the DREs. Voting on the DREs took longer because the voter had to page through the candidates, two constitutional amendments and four County bond issue referenda. Many voters were unfamiliar with the last items and took extra time to read them. Because two forms of voting machines were being used, it was necessary to have enough space to set up the DREs and also to have enough privacy booths and stations for people to vote by paper. Some rooms were too small to comfortably accommodate all the necessary equipment and still provide privacy.

The DREs are old and sometimes unreliable, taking time to reboot frequently or for election workers to get a replacement machine. The vendor has since gone out of business. Therefore, it is not possible for the County to replace the DRE voting machines or get replacement parts to repair the ones in stock. All of these factors taken together, as well as an increase of the number of persons voting on Election Day, contributed to lines waiting for the voting machines, and therefore waiting to get into the polling room.

Therefore the Commission recommends that the County should move quickly to using only one integrated voting system throughout the County. The system should utilize electronically scanned ballots, and be an integrated system that is fully accessible to voters with disabilities.

There currently are enough optical scanners for each precinct to have one, but there will need to be additional machines acquired to replace the current ones as well as to have additional ones in future years. In addition, acquiring high-speed scanners should be investigated to speed up the Central Absentee Precinct (CAP) and recounts. The Office of Elections should begin now to have all the necessary equipment in place before the 2016 presidential election, preferably in time for the 2015 election, so that voters and Election Officers will gain experience using the new voting equipment before the next presidential election.

Therefore the Commission recommends:

- **In order to educate voters about voting on paper ballots, a publicity campaign should begin with the 2013 primary election to explain that these ballots are counted right at the time they are electronically scanned and are totaled at the end of Election Day, just like the DREs are. Voters have told Election Officers that they did not want to vote with paper ballots because they believed that the paper ballots were not counted immediately or at all.**

- To eliminate confusion, paper ballots should be referred to as electronically scanned ballots in order to better communicate this voting process.
- Each precinct should have an optical scan with sufficient backup scanners available and a long-term goal of two scanners per precinct as necessary.
- The Commission recommends that Fairfax County maintain sufficient privacy booths well in excess of the statutory minimum of one per 425 registered voters. There should be one privacy booth for every 250 registered voters in a precinct.

A contributor to long lines was complex ballots. **Therefore the Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors should not schedule multiple bond referenda in presidential election years in order to keep the ballot shorter and more manageable.**

The Commission reviewed how the physical aspects of polling places could provide obstacles to voters.

Therefore the Commission recommends:

- Polling places must provide sufficient parking for voters.
- The Office of Elections should pursue discussions with FCPS regarding the feasibility of not having parent-teacher conferences scheduled on Election Day in presidential election years.
- Rooms used as polling places need to be big enough to allow the Election Officers to efficiently operate the polling place and maintain sufficient privacy for voters.

In the November 2012 Election, there were lines outside buildings, forcing people to wait in the cold to vote.

- **Therefore the Commission recommends:**
- **When scouting for polling place locations, the Office of Elections should look for places where lines can form inside.**
- **In existing polling places in schools, the Office of Elections staff should ask FCPS to ensure that the particular room used is in such a place that long lines can form inside.**
- **Election Officers should be trained in ways to configure lines and room layouts to maximize efficiency.**

In 16 instances, two precincts are located in the same building. Some voters and Election Officers report that voters have difficulty finding the correct room or stand in line in the wrong room and then have to stand in line again at the correct place.

- **Therefore the Commission recommends:**
- **Co-located precincts should be avoided, but if it is necessary to locate more than one precinct in a building, certain mitigating measures should be taken:**
- **Co-located precincts should be adequately staffed so that a person can be located outside voting rooms to direct voters to the correct room and/or correct line. Pages could be especially useful in co-located precincts, but if pages are not available, then an Election Officer should be assigned to work outside if possible;**
- **Precinct maps must be posted outside each room so that voters can determine which room is their polling place;**
- **Signage should be improved to assist voters in finding the correct room;**
- **The County should aggressively advertise how voters can find or confirm their precinct and polling place after they are already inside the building, such as a “mobile app” that allows voters access to their voter information from their mobile devices.**
- **The recommendations above are not limited only to co-located precincts.**

The Commission reviewed the legal requirements regarding the maximum number of voters in each precinct. Those requirements are as follows:

1. When a County precinct is established, it cannot have fewer than 100 registered voters.
2. When a precinct is established, it cannot have more than 5,000 registered voters.
3. When the number of voters who voted in a precinct in a presidential election exceeds 4,000, the general registrar must notify the governing body, which must revise the boundaries within six months.

While all of Fairfax County’s precincts meet the legal requirements, many factors including size are considered in recommending precinct changes.

Therefore the Commission recommends:

- **In precincts where there are unusual circumstances in the configuration of the precinct or difficulty in finding an adequate single polling place location, or recurring late closings, e.g., Skyline precinct, it may be necessary for the Board of Supervisors to split the precinct even if it does not meet the maximum numbers required for splitting. Numbers should not be the only criteria.**

- When new precincts are created, the name of the precinct should not be repetitive of other names (i.e., Lorton, Lorton Station, and Lorton Center), to avoid voter confusion.
- Curbside voting is an important part of making the electoral process accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Larger signs with writing large enough to be read from the car are needed. Oftentimes the phone number is illegible.
- The County should explore the use of technology to make it possible to make an appointment for curbside voting.
- The Commission recognizes the importance of complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and making voting easily accessible to all disabled voters. This includes training Election Officers to assist voters with disabilities as well as educating voters with disabilities about their rights to vote absentee. All polling places must be ADA compliant.
- The Board of Supervisors should be aware that there is a new class of voting equipment that the County will eventually be required to purchase beyond what is currently in use (for example, devices compliant with the federal Help America Vote Act). When the County purchases new voting equipment, it should be an integrated system that is fully accessible to voters who may have a variety of disabilities.
- Informational and directional signage at polling places generally needs to be enhanced.
- voting in the Government Center. More parking spaces should be reserved for voters.
- Satellite locations for absentee in-person voting should be treated as precincts, even though that is not required by law.
- Particularly in presidential election years, satellite voting hours should be increased in the later weeks. More Saturdays should be added earlier in the fall and its success should be evaluated.
- The use of optical scan voting equipment in satellite voting locations will require the County to provide all of the ballot combinations in use throughout the County for each election. The County should move to the use of technology that would allow the printing of ballots on demand in the satellites.
- Voters who come to satellite polls asking to “vote early” should not be turned away, but given an application which includes the rules for eligibility to vote absentee.
- When a voter applies by mail for an absentee ballot within 45 days of the election, the Office of Elections is required to respond by sending a ballot within three days after receiving a completed application. In order to address the surge of applications, the Office must employ and train enough workers to meet that requirement to ensure that voters get their ballots in time to vote.

Fewer voters voted absentee in November 2012 than in November 2008. The Commission reviewed the issues surrounding absentee voting.

Therefore the Commission recommends:

- Absentee voting should be encouraged for those eligible to do so, particularly in presidential election years. The Office of Elections and the Office of Public Affairs should undertake a campaign to educate voters on the process of voting absentee, both in person and by mail.
- Voters with disabilities should be encouraged to vote absentee in person, especially if they cannot stand in line for long periods of time.
- The space used in the Office of Elections for absentee in person voting is too small, in the hall, and provides no privacy. The Office of Elections needs a larger, dedicated room for absentee in person

The Commission reviewed the recruitment, training and deployment of Election Officers as well as seasonal employees in the office. Efficient, well-trained Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs and Election Officers are critical to the efficient operation of the polls. The Commission noted that fewer Election Officers were deployed to precincts in 2012 than in 2008, because fewer workers were needed to work the EPBs. The number of Election Officers needed will vary by year with presidential years requiring additional people to work lines and “direct traffic.” Recruitment of a sufficient number of Election Officers is a recurring problem, which is exacerbated in presidential election years. Moreover, even after Election Officers are recruited, retained, and trained, the number of “no shows” is high. No data is available to show when the last voter voted in each precinct during the November 2012 election. However, the Office of Elections was able to supply, as a proxy, data showing when the voting machines were turned off in each precinct, which then indicates the very latest that any voter could have voted in each precinct. There is a correlation between Election Officer “no shows” and late machine closing times. Of the 23 precincts in which the machines were shut down more than one hour after the poll closing

time (7:00 p.m.), 16 of those precincts had fewer Election Officers working than were originally assigned.

Therefore the Commission recommends:

- The Office of Elections and the political parties should aggressively recruit Election Officers and obtain their commitments to serve sufficiently in advance of Election Day to allow for training as required by law.
- There was discussion about whether the compensation paid to Election Officers should be raised and whether training time should be compensated. It is recommended that the Electoral Board should investigate whether raising the compensation would have a significant effect on recruiting more Election Officers. Formally surveying Election Officers and former Election Officers would provide useful information.
- Effective training is critical to the successful operation of the polling place on Election Day. Hands-on training as well as class room training would be beneficial for Election Officers. In addition, the Office of Elections should consider adding diversity training to the Election Officer training to increase officials' sensitivity to diverse voters.
- Chiefs should assemble their team together and set up the polling place the night before each election, giving the team the opportunity to know each other and to address issues of how the precinct operation will flow. Therefore, all polling places should be available exclusively for election purposes the night before the election after 6 p.m.
- Although the Office of Elections uses June registration numbers to plan the allocation of resources to precincts, the Office of Elections should review updated voter registration numbers in the fall before finalizing the assignment of Election Officers and equipment to precincts.
- There needs to be a pool of Election Officers in reserve, but immediately available, to substitute in for Election Officers who are assigned to polling places but then do not show up to work on Election Day or are unable to complete their assignment.
- Election Officers with significant difficulties in performing their tasks effectively must receive additional training or not be retained.
- There is a need for more language diversity among Election Officers. The Office of Elections and the Office of Public Affairs should aggressively work with diverse community organizations and foreign language media to recruit Election Officers.
- In recruiting Election Officers, the County should

explore providing a bonus for workers with special skills, e.g., language or technology.

- The County should retain more rovers. Some rovers were unable to get to several precincts because of emergency demands.
- The Page program, run in conjunction with FCPS, is extremely successful and is to be encouraged and expanded.

The voter registration process at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) continues to be a problem. During the November 2012 election, a number of voters arrived at the polls believing that they had registered to vote at the DMV only to learn that their registration had not been completed. The process for notifying voters whose registrations are not complete should be clarified and every effort must be made to ensure that applicants whose registrations are incomplete are being notified. Additionally, any time a voter's interaction with DMV results in a change to the voter's registration status, the voter should be notified that the change has been made.

The Office of Elections suggested the following to improve registration at the DMV and therefore the Commission recommends:

- The DMV should electronically transfer customers' voter registration application data from DMV to State Board of Elections' VERIS for registrations and address changes to eliminate the need to retype the data into VERIS.
- Given that an ink signature is required by Code, change the DMV Customer Service Center process to require an applicant to electronically complete and verify all application information, including those questions specific to voter registration, before it is printed and signed, and do not allow the application to be printed until all required fields have been completed.
- The DMV should make the records of who applied to register to vote available electronically to registrars to search to see if a voter tried to register and whether the registration process was done at a DMV Customer Service Center or when using the on-line or phone options.

The Commission believes that there are many opportunities to incorporate technology into the voting process.

Therefore the Commission recommends:

- The County has a "mobile app" that will allow voters to find their polling places via their cell phones and this should be better publicized.

- **Ballot on Demand technology will facilitate use of optical scan machines in satellite absentee voting locations, because it will allow voters from any part of the County to vote in any absentee satellite, without the need for the Office of Elections to provide numerous paper copies of each one of the many ballot combinations in use for a November General Election.**
- **Scanning of voter registration applications and absentee ballot applications will minimize errors in voter registration records and processing of absentee ballot applications and minimize problems with finding voters when they show up to vote.**
- **Recognizing that voting machines will continue to change and improve, the Commission recommends that the County establish an enterprise fund for voting equipment replacement like the fund established to replace computers and other assets. This would smooth out the large financial investments needed all at once when voting machines must be replaced.**

Some of the Commission's ability to obtain the information it needed to inform itself and develop recommendations to improve the electoral process was hindered by the fact that the Office of Elections, Electoral Board, and General Registrar are defendants in litigation that was filed before the Commission was formed and remained pending throughout the time the Commission met and prepared its report. Outside counsel retained by the State Division of Risk Management to defend the litigation advised the Office of Elections, Electoral Board, and General Registrar not to respond directly to the Commission's requests for information because of the risk that their doing so could jeopardize their ability to defend themselves in the litigation. Therefore, the Commission's requests for information had to be answered, if at all, at the next meeting through documents already existing, documents created to respond and then approved by the outside attorneys, or by the staff from the County Attorney's Office who gathered information and reported back to the Commission.

The Commission's recommendations address only those improvements that are within the purview of the County to implement. The Commission recognizes that there are other issues whose requirements are established by the Commonwealth and changes in those and other areas could make a difference.

Latest Housing Stats: VA. Among Least Affordable

*[Ed. Note: Janey George is LWVFA's representative to AHOME, which has gleaned the following information from **Out of Reach 2013**, an annual report detailing rental and income data released by the **National Low Income Housing Coalition**.]*

In Northern Virginia, renters need to earn \$27.15 per hour, or an annual salary of \$56,480, to afford our area's fair market rent of \$1,412 for a two- bedroom apartment. That rent translates into a work week of 148 hours by a minimum wage earner (\$7.25/hr) to afford rent and also have income for food, transportation, utilities, medical and child care.

The report provides the Housing Wage and other housing affordability data for every state, metropolitan area, combined non-metropolitan area and county in the country. The Housing Wage is the hourly wage a family must earn, working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, to be able to afford the rent and utilities for a safe and modest home in the private housing market. **The Housing Wage in Virginia is two dollars more than the National Housing Wage of \$18.79. Virginia has the highest Housing Wage among all of the states in the Southeast and is the 9th least-affordable state in the nation.**

There are broad policy implications for children and families, our economic sustainability and our transportation network when a significant percentage of our workforce must work excessive hours to secure safe, decent affordable housing. Do local governments consider the public costs of our shortage of affordable housing opportunities to our region? Are the appropriate investments in housing being made, just as we invest in education, public safety and the environment?

To access the report data for Virginia and our region, go to http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/2013-OOR-VA_0.pdf.

Think Green . . .

Recycling paper instead of making it from new material generates 74 percent less air pollution and uses 50 percent less water. (EPA, 2008)

Springfield Unit Hosts Discussion to Find Ways to Improve Advocacy

By Ginger Shea

Advocacy describes whatever the League does, at every level of government, to implement its positions, principles and program goals. At an April 11 meeting hosted by the Springfield Unit, members made several suggestions for increasing our advocacy and outreach. Co-presidents Julie Jones and Helen Kelly attended the morning meeting.

Background

Advocacy, which in League terminology was formerly called “action”, is the end result of the program process. In other words, study leads to consensus; consensus leads to a position; and it is those positions for which we advocate.¹

“Advocacy” is the League term that includes the support activities that can be done by 501(c)(3) tax exempt organizations (LWVFA Education Funds) as well as those that can be done by 501(c)(4) organizations like the LWVFA (tax exempt but not tax deductible for its contributors). Advocacy activities, except lobbying, can be funded with Education Fund monies. This is the case even when only one side of an issue is presented, as long as no call to action on a particular piece of legislation is issued. Such activities can include: analyzing issues, providing information, making recommendations for reform, developing educational materials, and providing forums for discussion and education. Advocacy encompasses working for or against causes, as well as supporting or recommending positions.

“Action” covers those activities that are meant to influence legislation, commonly called lobbying. In *League Basics*, lobbying is defined as an attempt to influence specific legislation that has been introduced in a legislative body. Lobbying includes action that transmits a point of view on a specific piece of legislation to elected officials or their staffs, as well as action urging the public to contact their legislators about a specific piece of legislation. League support or opposition to ballot questions and budget proposals is also considered lobbying. Action must be funded through general operating funds, not education funds. Action is taken in the name of the League only by the president, or her designee, and only with permission of the Board or the executive committee.

Most other activities promoting League positions that do not fall within the strict definitions of lobbying noted above

are general advocacy and may be funded by charitable contributions. One important caveat is Leagues are advised to keep clear lines between voters’ service activities and advocacy activities. For example, Leagues that have taken a position on a ballot measure should not include that position in their Voters’ Guide.

Speaking With One Voice

The national League is responsible for determining strategies and action policies that ensure that the League’s message on national issues is consistent throughout the country. Similarly, state Leagues are responsible for a consistent state message, and local Leagues must cooperate to ensure that regional issues are addressed in a consistent matter by neighboring Leagues and, in our area, with LWNCA positions and policies.

- Our League is expected to take whatever official action is requested in response to national or state action alerts. Our League should encourage members to take action as individuals on the topic without mentioning that they are members of the League. LWVFA should provide sufficient background for members to take action, and then report the results to the members.
- LWVFA cannot take action on state or national positions without consulting the state or national League unless an Action Alert has been issued.
- LWVFA cannot lobby state or national officials without consulting with the state or national League.

Advocacy/Action in Our Community

Instances when it is important for LWVFA to publicize and take action on our positions:

- Fairfax County and Fairfax County Public Schools budget proposals
- Fairfax County General Assembly delegation pre-session public hearing
- Bond referenda
- Redistricting of supervisors’ districts
- BOS and other hearings on major issues on which the LWVFA has support positions

Board criteria in determining its advocacy /action efforts include:

- Existing position to support this advocacy/action

effort

- Importance of the issue
- Importance of LWVFA addressing this issue
- Possibility of conflict with other League positions or other Leagues
- Availability of members for advocacy efforts
- Sufficient time to achieve advocacy goal
- Alternative ways to advocate for this issue

Advocacy/Action Procedure

Advocacy or action may be recommended by any member of the League based on local positions or positions held by higher levels of League. A written proposal listing our position, the recommended action, and any pros and cons should be sent to the Action Director or committee chair or president. Draft language for any written materials such as testimony or a letter should be included.

The Board discusses the proposal, determines specific actions to be taken, and assigns specific responsibilities as needed. For action involving state or national officials, the Board will request permission from the appropriate level of League. When timing is a consideration, the Executive Committee may approve an action proposal.

Reports of the action taken should be made to the members and notice may be given to the community through follow up publicity.

1 The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area, **Policies and Procedures**, August 26, 2012, is the source for the explanations of the methods of League advocacy.

LWVPWA MAL on the Road to Full League Status

By Olga Hernandez, Liaison

The Prince William Area Member at Large (MAL) Unit has received full League status approval from the LWV-VA Board at their March 8 meeting. The unit started in 2007 as a unit of the LWV Fairfax Area League by LWVFA members that resided in Prince William County. The unit later became an MAL unit of the LWV-VA and remained so until March 2013. The group has been very active in the community, having various activities, helping to register high school seniors in county schools, producing a great newsletter, website, Voters' Guides and a "They Represent You" (TRY) brochure listing all elected representatives in their area.

The group has a dedicated core group of members and has had three chairs in the past five years--a sign of a stable organization is such that leadership can be passed on. Founding members, Judith Anderson, Jessie Barringer, Katherine Gotthardt, Carol Korb, Carol Proven, Jeanette Rishell, Terry Rudman, Sheila School (former chair), Shirley White and Heidi Whitesel are to be commended for being the spine that stood strong to make sure the group held steady and grew. Joyce Ard, a former chair, continued the tradition and current chair Carol Noggle carried the group over the finish line toward full recognition by the LWVUS, the next step to full status. The documentation Carol Noggle and Jessie Barringer compiled to support their application to the LWV-VA board was awesome.

In a time when many League groups are contracting, it is a beacon of light that shines in Prince William County where the League is growing. As their liaison, I am extremely proud of their success. The Prince William County, City of Manassas and City of Manassas Park and the towns of, Dumfries, Haymarket, Occoquan and Quantico are truly blessed to have such a group in their midst.

Protecting Our Voting Rights, From the States to the Supreme Court

By Therese Martin

Recently, LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara published a new blog on the Huffington Post discussing the heightened level of activity around voting rights in state legislatures up through the U.S. Supreme Court. Be sure to read and share this important piece.

Three important election law bills that the League opposed during this year's Virginia General Assembly session passed both houses and were signed into law by the governor. All now go to the Department of Justice for preclearance before they can take effect. They are examples of what President MacNamara writes about in her blog. Two of them would overturn the voter ID legislation enacted just last year that resulted in all registered voters being sent voter registration cards that could be used for ID at the polls last November. If approved by the DOJ, and funded, the bills would take effect in 2014 and require that all voters show a photo ID when

going to the polls. Another bill would establish requirements on groups that carry out voter registration drives, such as the League. It would require registering with the State Board of Elections or a local registrar, taking training, signing an affidavit, and turning in the forms earlier than now required. The League will be discussing the implementation of the legislation with the State Board of Elections and the Fairfax Elections Office and report back to members.

On a positive note, we were happy to see that a bill that the League supported was enacted by the General Assembly and signed by the governor. It will allow online voter registration by persons who have a Virginia driver's license or identification issued by the DMV. More information will be forthcoming.

As you might have guessed, we have our work cut out for us in providing voters' service this summer and fall. Please sign up to help when asked.

Domestic Violence Update . . .

Violence Against Women Act Reauthorized

President Obama recently signed the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA creates the policy and programmatic priorities for funding domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking programs nationwide.

In addition, new tribal provisions of particular importance closing jurisdictional gaps that had long compromised American Indian and Alaska Native women's safety and access to justice have been added. This change supports the sovereignty of tribes and holds perpetrators accountable – a necessary step to reducing violence against Native women.

The reauthorization of VAWA also ensures that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender survivors have access to the services they need and deserve, enables victims in publicly subsidized housing to stay safe by transferring to a different unit or location, and adds protections for college students, who have some of the highest rates of rape in the nation. Attorney General Eric Holder said, "I applaud Congress for passing a bipartisan reauthorization that protects everyone – women and men, gay and straight, children and adults of all races, ethnicities, countries of origin, and tribal affiliations."

One more item of interest to Fairfax Leaguers is the passing of a bill in Richmond to assist victims in releasing them from leases when they are not able to remain in their homes. Governor McDonnell signed this bill into law.

Answers Provided for Budget Questions

LWVFA's spirited meeting with Fairfax County budget analysts in March ended with several questions brought by Leaguers unanswered. Laura O. Lazo, Senior Budget Analyst for Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget, has subsequently researched the issues and provided answers. Her responses are as follows:

Q. The General Fund Revenue chart in the Overview section of the budget includes estimates of potential tax refunds of \$5 million for Real Estate Taxes, \$10 million for Personal Property Taxes, and \$10 million for Business, Professional and Occupational Licenses (BPOL) Taxes. What is a typical level of refunds?

A. Tax refunds are paid out of the delinquent revenue collected for the corresponding tax category. Delinquent tax collections are usually shown net of refunds. In FY 2014, however, the County anticipates a larger than typical level of refunds that may exceed the level of delinquent taxes collected. Just like the County, residents and businesses are very carefully reviewing any possibility for reducing costs, including the taxes they pay, or have recently paid. Significant swings in commercial values have increased commercial real estate tax appeals. In addition, there are concerns over potential litigation regarding Personal Property Taxes and BPOL Taxes. The specifics of these potential cases cannot be discussed publicly at this time.

Q. To provide context for the projected increase of 8 percent for all health insurance plans, effective Jan. 1, 2014, what is the average increase for this year?

A. The increases ranged from 6.8 percent to 13.6 percent for January 2013. Most County employees are in the Cigna High plan, and that one had the 13.6 percent increase.

Domestic Violence Hotline
(703) 360-7273

Kelly Praises 2014 Budget in Testimony Before BOS

[Ed. Note: Testimony presented to the BOS on April 11.]

Good Evening, Chairman Bulova and members of the Board of Supervisors. I am Helen Kelly, Co-President of the League of Women Voters, speaking to you on behalf of our members and supporters in Fairfax County and Fairfax City. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am happy to tell you that we in the League of Women Voters see many things in the new advertised budget that we like, for example:

- **1.095 real estate tax rate.** The League of Women Voters endorses this rate. Because Fairfax County offers real estate tax relief for its most vulnerable residents, we believe the 2014 tax rate will better support basic services during this period when the state and federal governments are reducing their funding to Fairfax County. We are happy to pay this rate, because we realize that it supports services that benefit our communities.

The League has long supported revenue diversification that would help provide property tax relief. We again urge you to consider adoption of a meals tax and the imposition or increase in fees on services to achieve this.

We applaud your decision to set up the Bi-Partisan Election Process Improvement Commission to recommend ways to avoid long lines in future elections. We endorse their recommendations, and approve of the financial latitude that is in the budget to implement them.

We also commend County Executive Edward Long for maintaining budget levels for certain important functions of the County government. We urge you to follow his lead, and **not** impose budget cuts on these agencies:

- **Office of Elections.** This budget supports our right to vote in two important areas: First, Equipment Purchases – We are pleased to see that the 2014 budget level could provide a down payment on new voting machines and Electronic Poll Books, both of which speed up the voting process. We also notice and support the \$6M proposed for equipment purchases in the 2015 budget that will allow the Office of Elections to continue these upgrades before the 2016 Presidential Election. Second, Staffing – We support continued funding of the six satellite voting

locations and the budget level needed to hire and train enough seasonal staff in advance of peak in-person absentee voter demand.

- **Sheriff's Office.** We oppose further cuts in the Sheriff's Office and agree with Mr. Long that the Deputy presence in Civil Court should not be eliminated to save money. 99,717 civil hearings each year deal with such cases as mental commitments, visitation rights, divorce hearings and contract disputes. We believe that the Deputy presence in these emotionally charged hearings is necessary to protect public safety.

But we are concerned about one budget category that has been cut in the past:

- **Library Hours.** Public school students whose families do not have a home computer depend on public libraries for internet access to complete homework assignments. We urge you to ensure as many libraries as possible are open on Saturdays and Sundays. If necessary, we suggest forfeiting some morning weekday hours to make this possible. Maintaining weekend hours will ensure that students whose working parents must drive them to the library will have enough time to do assigned research.

Again we endorse the new real estate tax rate, propose the use of available additional resources, and support continued funding of the valuable functions of the Office of Elections, the Sheriff's Office and Libraries. We encourage you to maintain current funding levels for these agencies. Thank You.

Unit Fundraiser Scheduled for June 12 in Burke Centre

Fairfax Station unit is sponsoring a fundraiser at the Hopsfrog Grill in Burke on Wednesday June 12, 2013 between 11:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. Address is: 5765 Burke Center Parkway, Burke VA 22015; phone is 703-239-9324. Website: www.hopsfrog.com The restaurant will give 10 percent of food revenues to LWVFA that day, so plan to enjoy lunch or dinner there with Leaguers, family and friends. Volunteers are needed to be available with voter information materials. Online reviews are excellent. Mark your calendar now.

This Month's Unit Meeting Locations

Topic: Improvements Needed in Election Process

Members and visitors 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 May 6, 2013, the locations were correct; please use phone numbers to verify sites and advise of your intent to attend. Some meetings at restaurants may need reservations.

Saturday, May 4

10 a.m. At-Large Unit and Briefing

Packard Center
4026 Hummer Rd.
Annandale 22003
Contact: Judy, 703-725-9401

Wednesday, May 8

9:30 a.m. Mt. Vernon Day (MVD)

Mt. Vernon Dist. Government Center
2511 Parkers Lane
Alexandria 22306
Contact: Louise, 703-960-0073

9:30 a.m. McLean (MCL)

Star Nut Gourmet
1445 Laughlin Ave.
McLean 22101
Contact: Peggy, 703-532-4417 or
Sharone, 703-734-1048

10 a.m. Fairfax Station (FXS)

8739 Cuttermille Pl.
Springfield, 22153
Contact: Kathleen, 703-644-1555

6:15 p.m. Dinner Unit (DU)

Yen Cheng Restaurant
Main Street Center
9992 Main Street 22030
Contact: Tin, 703-207-4669

7:30 p.m. Reston Evening (RE)

Reston Art Gallery at Heron House
Lake Anne Village Center,
Reston 20190
Contact: Lucy, 703-757-5893

Thursday, May 9

9 a.m. Reston Day (RD)

11020 Burywood Lane
Reston 20194
Contact: Viveka, 703-404-0498

9:30 a.m. Springfield (SPF)

Packard Center
4026 Hummer Rd.
Annandale 22002
Contact: Nancy, 703-256-6570 or
Peg, 703-256-9420

1 p.m. Fairfax City/Vienna FX-V)

Oakton Regional Library
10304 Lynhaven Pl.
Oakton 22124
Contact: Bobby, 703-938-1486 or
Liz, 703-281-3380

7:45 p.m. Mt. Vernon Evening (MVE)

Paul Spring Retirement Community
Mt. Vernon Room
7116 Fort Hunt Road
Alexandria 22307
Contact: Jane, 703-960-6820

Monday, May 13

1:30 p.m. Greenspring (GSP)

Hunters Crossing Classroom
Spring Village Dr.
Springfield 22150
Contact: Kay, 703-644-2670

Tuesday, May 14

10:30 a.m. Centreville-Chantilly (CC)

Sully District Gov. Center
4900 Stonecroft Blvd.
Chantilly, 20151
Contact: Olga, 703-815-1897

June Meetings:

TBA



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

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May, 2013

Julie Jones, Co-President

Helen Kelly, Co-President

Ron Page, Editor

Liz Brooke, Coordinator

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 citizen of voting age, male or female, 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.

LWVFA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Dues year is July 1 through June 30. Current dues year ends June 30, 2014.)

Membership Category: Individual \$65 ____; Household (2 persons–1 *VOTER*) \$90 ____; Donation \$ ____
Student \$32.50 ____; (Coll. Attending ____)

Membership is: New ____; Renewal ____; Reinstate ____; Subsidy Requested ____

We value membership. A subsidy fund is available, check block above and include whatever you can afford.

Dues are not tax deductible. Tax-deductible donations must be written on a separate check payable to LWVFA Ed. Fund.

Please Print Clearly!

Name _____ **Unit** _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip + 4** _____

Phone (H) _____ **(M)** _____ **E-Mail** _____

Thank you for checking off your interests:

<input type="checkbox"/> County Govt	<input type="checkbox"/> Voting Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Human Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Libraries	<input type="checkbox"/> Land Use Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Judicial Systems	<input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence

Mail to: LWVFA, 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403