



Redistricting in Virginia: A Tragi-Comedy in Three Acts

The program this month includes an overview of the recent redistricting “drama,” a play that may not be over yet if you consider possible lawsuits or a negative reaction by the Justice Department to the plan submitted. We give you a survey of developments, based primarily on news articles, starting with the dashing of the last best hope for change, which happened in 2009 in a sub-committee of the House of Delegates. We decided to forgo a briefing this month, so you need to look here for the response we are hoping to receive from this program. Two main questions: Is there anything in this overview that seems inaccurate or slanted? Should the League continue to pursue reform of the process, to a bi- (non?) partisan redistricting commission that cannot be ignored? Send responses to loismpage@cox.net.

Calendar

May

- 28-29 *ViVa! Vienna!*
- 30 Memorial Day

June

- 3 NCA Board meeting
- 4 **Briefing – CANCELLED**
- 8-13 **Unit Meetings – Redistricting**
update, Survey, Unit selection of
position
- 8 Skyline Plaza condo election
Bailey’s Crossroads
- 15 **LWVFA Board Meeting – both**
outgoing and incoming: Packard
Center 10 a.m.
- 17-20 LWVUS Council

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The President's Message

You will see a survey in the *VOTER* this month. Why? We need to know what you, LWVFA members, want this organization to be – how active – and in what areas we are to be active. As you all are aware, we have Board vacancies in what I believed LWVFA members thought were our “core” activities, Voter Service and Program. We can reorganize the Board and Board portfolios in order to do what we believe needs to be done, but how we will do it will depend on what you want this organization to be. So, read this survey, think about it, what you want and what you will do.

We had only 46 members at our Annual Meeting. We don't know why as we usually have 65-75. Was it because it was located in Herndon? We initiated the “quadrant” location of the Annual Meeting. Next year we would like to have it in the Mt. Vernon region. Does that mean only people in that area will come? You all realize this is our only business meeting every year and what is voted on determines what happens the next year or two years. Do you not care anymore? Has the League become a low priority for you? Was it just a bad time this year? We need to know, so please fill out the questionnaire and either mail it to the office, bring it filled out with you to your unit meeting or fill it out online. Thank you,

Janey

LWV-VA Needs Your Help . . .

Putting our New Elections Laws Positions to Work

The LWV-VA, working with funds from a LWVUS pass-through grant from the Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) project, needs the help to carry out several projects during the next two years. The projects or tasks are:

1. Update a 2008 review of the compliance of Virginia with the National Voting Rights Act (Sec. 7) requirements to provide voter registration at public assistance agencies.
2. Determine compliance with State Board of Elections policy 2009-005 regarding application of the policy on determining abode and domicile for residency.
3. Participate in a project designed to improve polling place management and training in Virginia.

Further information, contact Therese Martin, treasurer@lwv-va.org

Sewall-Belmont House and Museum Reopening May 18

After almost one year of significant renovation, the Sewall-Belmont House & Museum will reopen to the public on Wednesday, May 18, 2011. Beginning on May 18, public tour hours will be Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.. If you would like to arrange a group or private tour, please email education@sewallbelmont.org

Delay in Construction of I-395 Ramp at Seminary Road

By the end of 2011, 6,400 defense personnel will have transferred to the Mark Center. VDOT studies show near-gridlock conditions will occur on Seminary Road, Beauregard Street and I-395. A ramp is proposed to move carpools and buses from I-395 to Seminary Road and relieve some of that gridlock. Because the ramp will be built within the I-395 right-of way, VDOT thought it could begin construction of the ramp under a design-build contract. However, the EPA now requires a full environmental assessment which could delay construction of the ramp by as much as 18 months; The BOS has directed staff to draft a letter to the Federal Highway Administration and to our Congressional delegation expressing concerns about this delay and urging them to complete the environmental assessment as quickly as possible.

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2010 - 2011

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

Sargeant Provides Insight on Energy Challenges

By Lois Page, LWVFA Program Director

LWVFA's recent Annual Meeting featured Tim Sargeant, state and local affairs manager for Dominion Virginia Power. Sargeant's presentation provided an effective follow-up to the previous program provided by LWV of the National Capital Area, a survey on the adequacy of area energy sources.

Sargeant began by providing a sense of the scope of the area power needs. DVP currently has 6,100 miles of transmission lines and serves approximately 2 million customers in Virginia and northern North Carolina. Northern Virginia alone expects another 30 percent population growth by 2030. We have already become a central hub for internet data service centers. Some of these centers have their own dedicated transmission lines.

PJM, which is the independent coordinator of energy in 13 states and D.C., has indicated that Virginia will need 1 million homes' worth of megawatts (a megawatt powers 250 homes) by 2020. We have become a net importer of electricity, second only to California. Sargeant says it is obvious we need to reduce the amount we import.

He quoted some statistics to indicate the efficiency of DVP: it ranked high in a study of the fewest outages per 100 miles of electric transmission, its two nuclear power facilities rank in the top for efficiency of production and it is ranked 1st among southern large utilities for power quality and reliability. DVP has some of the lowest utility rates in the country.

His presentation also cited what the company is doing to improve reliability: improving its poles, trimming trees, putting lines underground for new construction, expanding the distribution to take into account the Silver Line, for example. The State Corporation Commission determined that it would cost \$3,000 per customer to put lines underground in older developments. Underground lines, in spite of their apparent reliability, do not last as long as above-ground lines.

Regarding energy sources, Sargeant says the company's goal is balance and diversity. By 2015 the company is looking to decrease its reliance on coal and oil and increase reliance on natural gas by 7 percent and renewable sources by 1 percent. To quote the Power Point, "Dominion supports

Virginia's goal of having 15 percent of power supply come from renewable resources by 2025." The utility currently produces 407 MW from renewable sources in Virginia and North Carolina and is eyeing additional biomass, solar and onshore wind sources. Sargeant outlined some of the problems with renewable sources. It is hard to make it consistent and is not yet cost efficient. There is a wind farm in West Virginia that has 134 turbines, which are huge and have an impact on the surrounding countryside. Siting the turbines is a huge issue that can take years. A proposal to site turbines off the coast of Virginia raises concerns with the Navy, NASA, and commercial fishermen.

The company is investing \$7.4 billion over the next five year on increasing energy output, to include improved transmission and distribution systems and substations. Because of some of these improvements, it no longer needs to construct the controversial PATH line, discussed extensively in the NCA study.

Sargeant also talked about "Demand Side Management," ways we can reduce our power demands by increasing our energy efficiency and peak reduction. Likely upcoming pushes include residential heat pump upgrades and tune-ups and residential duct sealing plus a number of commercial reduction initiatives. He pointed out that buildings provide 40 percent of carbon dioxide emissions. "Smart Meters," which can "reduce typical customers' energy usage by up to 4 percent" with no action needed by the customer, are beginning to be installed in Northern Virginia. Customers can see what their energy usage is by the hours, and the company can reduce power during off-peak hours. Otherwise the company must keep consistent voltage going into each home at all hours.

Sargeant said that the company has him an electric car to see for himself if this is the wave of the future.

State Convention Was Busy Time For Delegates

By: Olga Hernandez, LWV-VA President

The 2011 LWV-VA Convention was held in Blacksburg on April 30-May 1. The mountains of southwest Virginia are a long way from Fairfax but several LWVFA members did attend. The bylaws were amended as proposed, program was passed to review all our positions and a new Board was elected.

The program chair is now seeking members to work on a Task Force to review and edit our positions for consistency

and updated language. Subgroups will work on policies in Government, Natural Resources and Social Policy Areas. The review will not change the intent of the positions. If needed, the task force would recommend a study or update at a future time. Our positions have been written over many years by very different committees and thus are a hodgepodge of writing styles. If you can work on this project please contact Molly McClenon at mcclenon@stone.net.

National President Elisabeth MacNamara graced us with her presence and conducted a workshop on nonpartisanship and how we must continue the League mission undeterred by all the partisan noise. She highlighted that throughout the League history we have been accused of being Republicans, Democrats and even communist depending on the issue of the times. Today is no different from the 1950s when we spoke out against McCarthyism. Politics is often cyclical, with pushes and pulls in different directions; the League needs to stand firm and be the center that regular commonsense voters are looking for. Voter Service Director, Sue Worden moderated a session to share Voter Service experiences of the 2010 election. Many ideas were exchanged.

We had an excellent panel on redistricting including Judge Sam Johnston, a retired judge and member of the Independent Bipartisan Redistricting Commission; Anne Whitesell and



As they appear left to right: Molly McClenon, Sherry Zachry, Lynn Gordon, Therese Martin, Olga Hernandez, Sue Lewis, Anne Sterling, Sue Worden, Doris Tillman, Lynn Johnston. Flowers by Jane Sprague of the LWVMC

Sophie Huemer, both Roanoke College student participants in the Virginia Redistricting Map Competition, and Christian Trejbal editorial writer for the *Roanoke Times*. The panel was excellent and concluded that we have moved the process a couple of steps closer to reform. The entire convention is now posted online. You can find a link to it on our website.

As the outgoing president I was overwhelmed at the presents and show of support from my LWV-VA Board members and other Leaguers around the state. The official gift was a Tiffany engraved tray and crystal heart-shaped trinket box. Sherry also remembered the yellow roses with a purple ribbon recalling the Suffragist colors. I especially want to thank Sherry Zachry and Therese Martin for all their help and support. Anne Kanter also sent a pillow embroidered "Stop Me Before I Volunteer Again." I think I'll heed the message.

The new Board takes over on July 1, 2011. Elected Officers will be: Lynn Gordon, President; Anne Sterling, 1st VP; Sue Lewis, 2nd VP; Hatsy Curshall, Treasurer; Sherry Zachry, Secretary. Elected directors will be: Flo Marks, Betsy Mayr, Molly McClenon, Carol Noggle, Vivian Paige, Linda Rice, Carla Wiley. Nominating Committee will be Mary Houska, Madalyn Cafruny and Dianne Blais. We wish them the very best.

June Program: Looking Toward Local Action

The Fairfax League's local positions can be found in *Here We Stand*. (See our website <<http://www.lwv-fairfax.org>> and click on Fairfax League in Action to find *Here We Stand*.) Generally, they fall into three categories: Government, Natural Resources and Social Policy. This month, we are asking each unit to choose a single position of interest within one of those categories. Each unit would then determine the status of the issue in Fairfax County today. What legislation is in place supporting or opposing our position? Is there any proposed legislation related to the position pending? Should we be encouraging the Board of Supervisors to take further action on the position? Is there something that we should be watching or advocating? Are any parts of the position out-of-date?

The units will be asked to give a quick status report each month, and ultimately to issue a brief report on its findings. Many hands make light work, and we hope that these reports will inspire the Observer Corps, Action, and Program. This month, we ask that you select the position your unit will be researching and designate a contact person. We hope this task will stimulate some interesting discussions this month.

Smaller units are welcome to team up with other units. Members who are not affiliated with units are welcome to work together via email, etc. or to join a unit for this project. A list of positions to be studied will be announced.

Unit chairs should let Rona Ackerman know which position was selected by June 14. Unaffiliated members can contact Rona directly to let her know what they would be interested in working on. She will put you in contact with like-minded members. Rona can be emailed at lwvfa@vacoxmail.com or reached by phone at 703-282-2262.

Redistricting in Virginia: A Tragi-Comedy in Three Acts

By Lois Page, LWVFA Program Director

Prologue

It is 7:30 a.m. on a Monday in 2009, Martin Luther King Day, at a meeting of the House of Delegates Privileges and Elections sub-committee of the Virginia General Assembly. Six committee members are present, plus a host of bleary-eyed but determined citizens who plan to speak in favor of similar bills before the sub-committee, which consists of four Republicans and two Democrats. The bills before the sub-committee would revise the way the General Assembly does redistricting. It has passed the Senate already by a large margin and sets up a requirement that redistricting be done by a bi-partisan commission. Members of the Redistricting Coalition, including the League of Women Voters of Virginia, beg the committee to let a revised redistricting bill reach the floor of the House, to stop allowing politicians to choose their voters rather than the other way around.

It is not to be. On a party-line vote, which would have been unrecorded if all the witnesses present hadn't observed the vote, the bill fails 4 to 2. At least three of the naysayers are from safe districts. Four people determined how redistricting would be done in 2011. The "way-we've-always-done-it" triumphs once again. Similar redistricting bills were later passed by the Senate but suffered a similar fate when they reached the same subcommittee. Except for a few, most onlookers are unaware how decisive and final that early morning vote will be. The same scenario was repeated in 2010.

Act 1: The Calm Before the Storm: Redistricting in Fairfax County

This was the only bright spot in the redistricting "game." The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted its plan for redrawing the County's magisterial districts to reflect the new population count by the U.S. Census on November 16, 2010. As it did in 1991 and 2001, the County appointed a citizen advisory committee to recommend new district lines. The County website also offered other ways that the citizens could provide input in the process. The committee included representatives from each supervisor district; the Democratic and Republican parties; Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce; Federation of Citizens Associations; League of Women Voters; the African-American, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander communities; and community at large. Anne Kanter was the League's representative on the committee. She says that she finally got to serve on a "good" committee.

The 19-member committee began meeting and working in early 2011 to develop its recommendations. It submitted its report to the Board on March 28, including some 22 different

plans. Most plans recommended very few changes in district lines. Several plans were also submitted by the public. The Board held a public hearing on the recommended redistricting proposals on April 12, and adopted a redistricting plan at its April 26 meeting.

LWVFA Board member Therese Martin after consultation with the Board made the following statement to the Board of Supervisors when the Committee made its report:

"We were pleased to learn this past fall that, just as in earlier redistricting years, your Board decided to begin the redistricting process early and to appoint a citizen advisory committee to develop proposals for your consideration. You also invited proposals from the public and provided information and tools on your website. The League was pleased to be represented on the advisory committee, as has been the custom in the past, and noted the inclusion of many segments of our diverse community.

"Thus far, the County's redistricting process has been firmly in accord with League principles that call for transparency and effective citizen participation in government – and with the support positions of the League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area...

[I was] favorably impressed with their attempt to take into account communities of interest and town boundaries, while eliminating confusion at the polls and meeting constitutional and legal requirements."

In adopting the County's plan on April 26, the BOS published the following information about the changes made:

"The plan **maintains nine supervisor districts, but it shifts seven voting precincts** to different districts, as well

as changes the boundaries of three precincts. The complete precinct list and boundary changes are posted on the redistricting Web page, and the entire plan, as submitted to the attorney general, will be published online. The plan also will be available for inspection at the Office of the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

“The following precincts were moved:

- **Bristow** moves from Braddock to **Mason District**.
- **Eagle View** and **Monument** move from Springfield to **Braddock District**.
- **Walnut Hill No. 2** moves from Providence to **Mason District**.
- **Hunt** moves from Mount Vernon to **Springfield District**.
- **Coates** moves from Hunter Mill to **Dranesville District**.
- **Colvin** moves from Dranesville to **Hunter Mill District**. “

Act II: Redistricting in the state legislature: a farcical tragedy?

The words used to describe the redistricting process in the General Assembly this spring range from “farce” (*Washington Post*) to “contaminated process” (*Richmond Times Dispatch*), to “rigged game” (Mann and Ornstein), to “simply disappointing” (Mary Kimm of *Connection*), to “make-believe” (*Washington Post*).

The process that started with the sub-committee vote in that early morning conference room reached its inevitable ending when the governor signed into law on April 30 the redistricting lines that the GA had proposed. It was inevitable because it kept the foxes in charge of the hen house as had been true for decades. If one party is able to draw its own lines, the other party has to retaliate or lose. The new maps ignored the lines drawn by the governor’s own Independent Bi-partisan Redistricting Commission and the winning entries in the statewide competition of teams of politically savvy college students.

The deal was struck long before either of the groups working on maps even got started. Mann and Ornstein point out that State Senate Majority Leader Richard Saslaw (D) was stunningly candid in a radio interview describing the process politicians would follow to redraw the lines:

“ ‘The House does theirs. The Senate does theirs. And I’m not gonna interfere with the lines the House draws for the House. And they’re not gonna interfere with the lines I draw for the Senate. And I would simply say, well, you know, our goal is to make the Democratic districts, particularly the marginal ones, a little bit better than they are now. I’m not greedy. I’m not trying to put all the Republicans out of business by any stretch. They didn’t do that to us 10 years ago. And we’re not gonna do that to them.’ ”

“Saslaw described a classic bipartisan incumbent gerrymander; the majority Democrats in the state Senate would let the majority Republicans in the state House stack the deck for its incumbents, and vice versa. The biggest losers? The voters of Virginia, denied competitive elections in which the outcomes reflect their collective preferences.”

An interesting aspect of the process is that Governor McDonnell fulfilled a campaign promise to do something about redistricting by setting up his Independent Bipartisan Advisory Commission on Redistricting. Retired Campbell County Judge J. Samuel Johnston was a member of that commission and described the process for the attendees at the recent state convention of the League of Women Voters of Virginia. When both McDonnell and fellow candidate Creigh Deeds came out in favor of redistricting reform in 2009, Johnston felt, “We’ve come a long way, baby.”

He said the group worked diligently and followed these guidelines:

- One person, one vote per federal law
- Observation of requirements by the federal Voting Rights Act
- Contiguous and compact districts per the Virginia Constitution
- Observe communities of interest
- Observe municipal and county boundaries
- Retain regional identities
- The ordinary citizen would have the opportunity to interact and understand.

Judge Johnston said the committee worked hard and completed its work in a short time, its chair Robert Holsworth running a tight ship. They concluded that reform is needed, voters need to choose, and we need an open, understandable and fair system. He felt that the creation of a student competition was a stroke of genius.

However a *Washington Post* editorial dated April 4 described how the work of the commission was received:

“There, in an august committee room of the state capitol, the commission was presented with one possible redrawn map of the state’s congressional districts, based on new population data from the 2010 Census. The map happened to remove Rep. Eric Cantor, the Republican House majority leader, whose home is in Richmond, from his own 7th District, which he has represented for a decade.

“A titter spread among the reporters and other spectators watching the proceedings. Everyone realized that in the real world of Virginia politics — where political maps are drawn first and foremost to protect incumbents and minimize the chances of genuine two-party electoral competition — this could never happen.

“Through no fault of its own, the commission, created by Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R) in fulfillment of what turns out to be an empty campaign promise, is engaged in little more than a charade. In recent days, as the commission finalized an array of serious and thoughtful maps, lawmakers have made it clear that they couldn’t care less what it recommends; they’ve agreed on their own maps, which will govern elections this fall for the House of Delegates and state Senate. Even the governor has distanced himself from his own commission; his spokesman said the commission’s recommendations ‘are theirs alone.’”

The student map drawing exercise was partly the brain child of George Mason professor Dr. Michael McDonald who has spoken to LWVFA on several occasions of the subject of gerrymandering. McDonald has been involved with the creation of line-drawing software with the idea that if everyone can draw lines, it will reduce the back-room nature of the process.

As the April 4 *Post* editorial explained, for several months, “15 teams of students and faculty from a dozen Virginia universities produced 55 electoral plans, a competition then winnowed to a handful of winners.

The idea was to present food for political thought — electoral map-making that made sense to voters, not just officeholders.” The student maps turned out to be very close to the commission’s.

Members of the League of Women Voters of Virginia convened in Richmond on March 22 to host the award ceremony for the winners of the competition. Two of the college students involved also participated in a redistricting panel at the LWV-VA convention, both from Roanoke College. Sophie Huemer assembled a team with a range of majors but all interested in politics. She described some of the difficulties, including Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads area, Richmond, and southwestern Virginia. Anne Whitesell said they learned how complex the process is, how you must take into account so many opinions.

Nonetheless, claiming that the student maps arrived too late to be given serious consideration, the Chair of the House Privileges and Elections Committee proudly announced that “We’ve got a deal here that maintains the balance of power!” (Christian Trejbal, *Roanoke Times*, speaker at LWV-VA convention).

A flurry of hope spread among supporters of fair redistricting when the governor vetoed the plan that the GA sent to him. An AP report that went out at the time of the veto said: “The Republican governor said Friday he has concerns about the Senate plan, which he said failed to receive bipartisan support. The Democrat-controlled Senate passed the measure on a party-line vote.

“The governor also said the proposed Senate districts are not compact as required by law, and that they do not properly preserve locality boundaries and communities of interest. He said he’s concerned the Senate plan may also violate the one person one vote principle of the state and U.S. constitutions.”



College students prepared to discuss their redistricting plan.

Both plans were vetoed because they were part of the same bill. An interesting aspect of the veto was that he singled out the plan for the Senate as the culprit, partly because it was not a bipartisan vote. One wonders what happened to the deal described by Sen. Saslaw where each party would vote for the other's plan, something that did not happen in the Senate but did happen to some extent in the House.

An April 19 editorial in the *Post* describes the veto: "In vetoing the Virginia legislature's proposed redistricting plan for state elections, Gov. Robert McDonnell noted last week that the commonwealth's constitution requires that electoral districts be composed of "compact territory." Even the most cursory glance at the state legislative maps produced by lawmakers, or at the map of congressional districts that has emerged from the House of Delegates, shows the legislators made a laughingstock of the compactness requirement — and of the idea of competitive elections."

The *Richmond Times Dispatch* added on April 18: "Last week an excellent editorial in the *Cavalier Daily*, the student newspaper at the University of Virginia, pointed out the independent advisory commission produced a far less disruptive redistricting plan for the General Assembly. McDonnell based his veto on the lack of bipartisanship in the Senate. His move is good news, but despite its bipartisan veneer, the House plan flunked the reform test as well."

After the veto, the GA went back to work, doubtless fearing, among other things that the drawing of lines could end up in court if they didn't figure out how to compromise. Both the Fairfax Electoral Board and the LWVFA had written to the General Assembly and governor about the number of split precincts. The League had urged them to eliminate as many split precincts as possible before approving the final plans, believing that "the proposed number of split precincts creates an unfunded mandate for local governments that are already hard-pressed to balance their budgets. Administering elections with split precincts means increased costs that could be avoided if each precinct included only one legislative district."

Then on May 2, word came from Tyler Millhouse of the *Richmond Times Dispatch*:

"On Friday, Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell (R) signed a revised legislative redistricting plan, redrawing the state's 40 Senate and 100 House seats. The governor's approval comes after contentious negotiations following his veto of the plan two weeks ago. At that time, McDonnell cited strong reservations about the political bent of the Senate plan drafted by Democrats. McDonnell's censure was less intense for House Republicans, citing too many divided

precincts. Following the veto, the House quickly passed a revised version of their chamber's maps, reuniting a handful of divided precincts.

"In the State Senate, Democrats initially expressed strong opposition to changes, defending the fairness of the plan. However, Democrats and Republicans ultimately reached a compromise and passed a modified plan 32-5.

"While several modifications to plans were made, it appears that the key compromise centered on Virginia Beach. The original plan had consolidated two Republican seats in the region into one district. The new plan has preserved two distinct districts.

"Governor McDonnell responded favorably to the revised plans. In a statement released prior to his signature, McDonnell stated that the plan retains more geographic and municipal boundaries, contains districts that are somewhat more compact, and passed the Senate on a strong bipartisan vote. McDonnell also said that the plan is a great improvement over the previous draft."

Mary Kimm describes some of the changes for Northern Virginia (*Connection*, April 8):

"Proposed changes in districts split communities, localities, counties and even precincts and homeowners associations. The City of Alexandria will likely now have three state senators. Arlington, which could be represented by a single state senator in a compact and highly effective district, could instead have as many as three Senate districts within its boundaries. Arlington's primary senate seat, District 31, will now snake along the Potomac River through McLean and Great Falls and actually encompassing part of Sterling, covering three counties in a densely populated area that begs for compact districts.

"This means residents of McLean and Great Falls will likely be represented in the Virginia Senate by someone from Arlington, who will try to understand the complexities of three very different counties. The change shifts Janet Howell's district 32 to the west, leaving thousands of residents to get to know new candidates who will likely be focused on other areas first.

"Mount Vernon, a highly diverse community, will also have its senate representation split, likely resulting over time in half being represented by someone from the City of Alexandria and half represented by someone from Prince William County, neither with the grasp of community needs that a Mount Vernon centered district would allow.

“George Barker’s district 39 scoops up parts of Prince William, the least densely populated parts of Fairfax County in Clifton and Fairfax Station, then takes a turn through densely populated Lorton, Newington and Franconia before poking its head into the City of Alexandria. This certainly does not comprise a “community of interest.”

The plan will now move to the Department of Justice for approval under the Voting Rights Act. Several lawsuits have been filed, and there are those who think the plan might end up in court. Stay tuned.

Act III: Enter late and in disguise: the redrawn congressional districts.

Unfortunately for the cause of nonpartisan line drawing, the Virginia General Assembly is also in charge of redrawing congressional lines, although it could likely agree to let the representatives themselves make the major decisions on how to draw the lines to preserve their seats, as happened 10 years ago.

In an article entitled “A Fairer Way to Redistricting in Virginia,” Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein (*Washington Post*, March 20, 2011) commented:

“The situation [‘classic incumbent bipartisan gerrymandering’] is different but just as smelly for the redrawing of lines for Virginia’s 11 congressional seats. As *Politico* described last week, the 11 incumbents--three Democrats and eight Republicans--cut a deal to protect each other, solidifying the GOP’s 8-to-3 edge by making several competitive seats strongly Republican while allowing Democrats to make a sinecure out of the seat of Rep. Gerry Connolly, who barely won in 2010.”

Among many other claims to fame, Mann and Ornstein served as judges for the Virginia Redistricting Map competition where Virginia college students prepared redistricting maps that were summarily ignored by the GA. They are co-authors of the book “The Broken Branch: How Congress Is Failing American and How to Get it Back on Track.”

After its careful crafting of its own districts, the GA apparently is too tired to take up the task of congressional district lines at the moment, according to reporter Tyler Whitley of the *Richmond Times Dispatch* in a May 1 article entitled “Next Up Is Congressional Redistricting, But Not Soon.” He says, “With legislative redistricting out of the

way, legislators will turn their attention to congressional redistricting, but not anytime soon.

“ ‘I think everyone is tired,’ said Senate Majority Leader Richard L. Saslaw, D-Fairfax. ‘It’s not as if we have to hurry,’ he added. Congressional elections are not until next year, whereas elections to the General Assembly are scheduled this fall with primaries on August 23.

“But Paul Nardo, chief of staff to Speaker of the House William Howell, R-Stafford, said he hoped the General Assembly could return to Richmond later in May. But not this week, he emphasized. ‘Folks need a break,’ he said.”

A *Times Dispatch* staff article on May 4 explains where things are so far:

“Regarding the U.S. House of Representatives, Virginia’s House plan protects the congressional delegation’s 11 incumbents. The Senate plan changes the 4th District into a black-majority constituency while transforming the black-majority 3rd into a black-minority district with mild Democratic tendencies. Republican Randy Forbes could confront problems in the new 4th, although he should not be counted out – especially in elections affected by a general GOP surge. Democrat Bobby Scott would rate as the favorite in the Senate’s version of the 3rd, but a GOP surge could have implications for him.

The House map preserves a geographically incoherent 3rd that meanders from Richmond to Hampton Roads. The Senate’s 3rd would endanger Scott, the House’s 3rd would not. Although the Senate map creates a more compact district based in Hampton Roads, it also distorts the 1st, which would run from the Northern Neck to regions south of the James. The black-majority 4th seems less misshapen than the old 3rd or new 1st.

It is possible that the House and the Senate will agree to something. The U.S. Department of Justice will play a significant role when it vets the results [under the Voting Rights Act.]. The Senate’s approach appears likelier to win the Obama administration’s nod. The whole thing could be headed to the federal courts. Republicans in particular may rue the day they repudiated reform.”

A *Washington Post* editorial on April 19 described the proposed congressional map in a colorful way:

“On the congressional map, the 5th District is shaped like a giraffe from the legs up, its torso in the south settling broadly upon the North Carolina border, its neck stretching hundreds of miles north through Virginia’s midsection, and its head

nodding into Washington's western suburbs. Not what you might call compact, let alone mindful of communities of common interest.

"Then there's the cartoonishly drawn 7th Congressional District — an ungainly kangaroo hopping southward on two legs — and the equally ludicrous 3rd District, which, by lumping several detached, remote communities east and south of the James River together with a mainland mass west of the river, would compel candidates to shuttle among their scattered constituents mainly by boat. Not to be overlooked is the jagged seahorse of the map's 11th Congressional District, in Northern Virginia, a gerrymandered mess.

"The logic — if you can call it that — of all this creative cartography is that it protects incumbents, or at least the incumbent party, by packing in voters from one party and excluding those from the other. Thus the 5th District, in the House of Delegates-endorsed map, is drawn as a job-security program to benefit Rep. Robert Hurt, a first-term Republican who narrowly beat incumbent Democrat Tom Perriello in last year's GOP sweep. And the 11th, which cherry-picks Democratic-leaning neighborhoods of Northern Virginia while dodging ones more sympathetic to Republicans, is a gift to Rep. Gerry Connolly, a Democrat who withstood a Republican challenge with a victory margin of less than half a percentage point last November."

The Denouement

Surprisingly, the mood among the redistricting panel participants at the LWV-VA convention was more upbeat about the future of redistricting reform than one might expect. Three of the panelists were people whose work had been ignored. The fourth was an editorial writer who had watched the process for years and who had hoped, mistakenly, that the unusual split chambers would lead to a compromise on reform. The audience included a number of Leaguers who had put in many hours on a statewide study and on lobbying legislators.

However, participants felt that some important steps had been made this time. The process has become more transparent. The student initiative showed that people care. Concerned citizens—even very young ones— can create plausible maps, using the increasingly accessible software. Christian Trejbal from the *Roanoke Times* urged us to always ask incumbents if they will support reform of redistricting.

Outgoing State President Olga Hernandez asked the Leaguers present if we should go forward with this mission. The answer was a resounding yes; and furthermore, the time to start on the next round is now.

Political fights over redistricting cause delays and increase costs . . .

Decennial Redistricting Adds Work and Costs for Elections Administrators

By M. Mindy Moretti, Senior Associate, Election Initiatives, The Pew Center on the States

Across the country, states are embroiled in the decennial process of redistricting that follows the release of the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The process is often fraught with controversy and can drag on for months.

The impacts redistricting has on local elections officials varies from state to state. Redistricting is usually, but not exclusively, more taxing for an urban jurisdiction than a rural jurisdiction. Quite often an entire rural county is included in a legislative district or a Congressional district so the amount of additional work can be minimal.

"There is a huge burden placed on the office during redistricting because it all has to be accomplished in such a

short time frame," said Edgardo Cortés, General Registrar, Fairfax County Office of Elections.

According to Cortés, staff time is required to provide technical support and feedback during the process, including things like working with the GIS Department to produce maps of new district and precinct boundaries. The office is responsible for implementing all the changes in preparation for the next election. This includes working with the County Attorney's Office to write the legal descriptions for precincts; working with Public Affairs in outreach to voters to inform them of changes; and recruiting election officers and acquiring voting equipment for new precincts.

Ed. Note: Excerpt from *electionline Weekly* – April 21, 2011 (electiononline.org)

State LWV Board Announces New Position Statement on Election Laws

ELECTION LAWS

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that democratic government depends on the informed and active participation of its citizens; that voting is a right and responsibility; and that election laws, regulations and administrative procedures should be uniformly designed and applied, and adequately funded to facilitate and increase voter participation throughout Virginia.

Role of the Commonwealth

Funding the cost of maintaining a statewide system of voter registration, and providing equal and easy access for voting throughout Virginia, are responsibilities shared by the Commonwealth and local governments. The Commonwealth should provide additional funding where localities are financially unable to support an accessible and well-managed election system.

The State Board of Elections must be given adequate authority and resources to: enforce election laws and mandatory standards for local election offices; encourage best practices in registration and elections management, especially in training election officers and officials; provide adequate oversight of registration and elections at locality and precinct levels; and oversee implementation of election laws, regulations and policies to ensure their consistent application across the Commonwealth.

Registration

Because the system of voter registration affects voter turnout, and because federal legislation has extended the availability and ease of voter registration in Virginia,

- Voter registration opportunities must be available, by mail and in person, consistently throughout the Commonwealth;
- A uniform system of voter registration is required to facilitate voting and prevent fraud; and
- Additional measures should be adopted to increase the availability of voter registration, especially those that utilize technological advances or provide cost savings, including:
 - Online voter registration,
 - Reducing the interval between the registration deadline and Election Day to the smallest number of days consistent with effective elections management, and

- Same-day registration at county and city central election offices.

In defining domicile and abode to determine residency for purposes of registration, a statewide policy should be applied and enforced to ensure:

- Uniform interpretation
- Broad construction
- Presumption of intent
- Consistent application

Voter registration by political party should not be adopted in the Commonwealth.

Elections

Election laws must be designed to facilitate voting and encourage participation of a large percentage of citizens in all elections. To this end, laws, policies and procedures affecting the voting process should be applied consistently in all parts of the Commonwealth, both prior to the election and at the polls on Election Day.

Prior to the Election

The LWV-VA supports:

- Legislation to allow all registered voters to vote absentee, without specifying a reason, prior to Election Day. Both choices– voting in person or by mail-- should be offered. (This no-excuse absentee voting is sometimes called “early voting.”)
- The use of satellite voting facilities, in areas where distance or inadequate transportation make it difficult for voters to reach a central election office for in-person absentee voting;
- The provision by all localities of evening and weekend voting hours at central and satellite offices, for several weeks before general elections;
- The use of electronic means for submitting absentee ballots by military and overseas voters if it can be accomplished while maintaining ballot security and integrity; and
- A pilot program of all-mail voting to test its use in some elections.

At the Polls

The following should be required throughout Virginia to ensure an efficient voting process:

- Electronic poll books, with back-up paper copies for emergencies;
- Appropriate precinct sizes and numbers of voting machines to minimize voting delays;
- Well-trained officers of election; and
- Polling places selected to maximize voter participation and near public transportation, wherever possible.

The LWV-VA is concerned that Virginia's polling hours might not be optimal for all areas of the Commonwealth, especially those close to adjacent states, and also concerned about the effect of long hours on officers of election. Split shifts and poll closing specialists should be used in all localities to ease the burden on officers of election, help in their recruitment, and ensure well-managed elections.

Legislation should be enacted to provide authority to the Courts to extend the polling hours in case of disasters and other emergencies that prevent the voters from getting to the polls, and include the provisions needed to ensure fair access to the polls throughout the Commonwealth. (2011)

Fairfax County BOS Submits Redistricting Plan to Department of Justice For Review

By Anne Kantor, LWVFA Representative on Redistricting Advisory Board

On April 29, the BOS sent a letter submitting a new magisterial district plan to the Department of Justice. This is the next step in redrawing the magisterial district boundaries as a result of the 2010 U.S. Census. If DOJ accepts it, and the plans submitted by the state for delegates and senators, primary elections can be held in August.

Plan 9A4 is a fairly simple plan. Only 7 precincts changed Fairfax County Supervisor districts. The number of Districts remains at 9. And although it [the plan] seems like a round-robin, really, it made sense when the Advisory Committee was looking at it.

- Hunt precinct moves from Mount Vernon to Springfield.
- Eagle View and Monument precincts move from Springfield to Braddock.
- Bristow precinct moves from Braddock to Mason.
- Walnut Hill #2 precinct moves from Providence to Mason.
- Coates precinct moves from Hunter Mill to Dranesville.
- Colvin precinct moves from Dranesville to Hunter Mill.

This leaves Sully with the most population: 124,203; and Mason the lowest: 115,991. However, the total deviation

from the ideal value, 120,192, is less than 7 percent, and well within the 10 percent demanded by law.

A new precinct, Pinewood, was created by splitting Woodlawn precinct along Frye Road. Woodlawn remains in Mount Vernon, and Pinewood goes to Lee. Within Sully, Powell and Willow Springs precincts are now divided by Stringfellow Road. Within Hunter Mill, Nottoway precinct was split to put the small portion that is within the Town of Vienna into the Vienna #6 precinct.

If your precinct has changed or changed districts, you will receive new voter registration cards from the County Registrar. If your Virginia Senate district lines are changed, ditto. If your state delegate lines are changed, yup. If your U.S. representative district is changed, well, you know. I believe they will all be separate mailings. Keep an eye on your mail. No matter what happens, unless you live in Nottoway, Woodlawn, or Willow Springs, you are not changing your precinct. You still vote at the same place. The precincts may just be a different color on the map.

Ed Note: See also the related article on Page 2, Col 1 for advice on how to participate in an effort to put new election law positions to work. Further information, contact Therese Martin, treasurer@lww-va.org

LWVFA 2011 Questionnaire – Both Practical and Philosophical

Before the LWVFA summer retreat, the leadership team would like your input. Since only about 50 percent of members usually attend our unit meetings, we would like greater participation in planning for our League future. Please take the time to fill out this paper copy and send it to the league office or give it to your unit chair at the June unit meeting. You will also have an opportunity to fill out the questionnaire online beginning in June. With more Leaguers’ input and ideas, we would like to fix, change, or redirect our focus or procedures to make retaining and recruiting members more appealing. We realize that we can’t please everyone, but we know that some things will have to be modified in the future without more people willing to help in leadership positions.

Give to your Unit Chair or Mail to: LWVFA, 4026 Hummer Road, Suite 214, Annandale, VA 22003

I joined the League of Women Voters because I wanted to: (check all that apply)

- a. become an informed voter b. learn more about issues c. be involved in the community
 d. study a certain issue e. _____

Section I - Answer on the continuum from: strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1)

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. LWVFA’s main mission should focus on: | | | | | |
| a. voter service | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| b. action or advocacy on our positions | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| c. researching issues | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I prefer to receive a paper copy of the <i>Fairfax VOTER</i> | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. I would be satisfied with only an online <i>Fairfax VOTER</i> . | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. I appreciate the email LWVFA notices I receive. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. I did my time in LWVFA leadership positions, now is the time for others to take over. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. The social aspect of unit meetings is important. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Raising funds is important because dues don’t cover all of the expenses. | | | | | |
| a. We should concentrate on community/condo elections | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| b. We should concentrate on business contributions | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| c. We should concentrate on unit fundraisers | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. I like the idea of revolving co-presidents. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Section II Check all that reflect your thinking.

1. LWVFA would like to begin a Lunch Bunch with a speaker who would share his/her expertise for about 30 minutes with time for discussion and follow-up questions. What appeals to you?
- Central location Revolving location in the county Library League office
 Govt, Center Restaurant bring own bag lunch Order a box lunch

This Month's Unit Meeting Locations

Topic: Redistricting in Virginia

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 12, 2011, 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, June 4

10 a.m. At-Large Unit and Briefing

CANCELLED

Wednesday, June 8

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

Mt. Vernon District Gov. Center
2511 Parkers Lane
Alexandria 22306
Contact: Gail, 703-360-6561

10 a.m. McLean (MCL)

Star Nut Gourmet
1445 Laughlin Ave.
McLean 22101
Contact: Gail, 703-356-2851

10 a.m. Fairfax Station (FXS)

7902 Bracksford Court
Fairfax Station 22039
Contact: Lois, 703-690-0908

12 noon Chantilly/Centreville (CC)

Sully District Gov. Center
4900 Stonecroft Blvd.
Centreville 20151
Contact: Susan, 703-391-0666

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

Working at Skyline Plaza Condo
Elections
Phone Tin for specifics
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, June 9

9 a.m. Reston Day (RD)

2615 John Milton Drive
Herndon, Va 20171
Contact: Rona 703-476-5758

9:30 a.m. Springfield (SPF)

7914 Carleigh Parkway
Springfield, VA 22152
Contact: Nancy, 703-256-6570
or Peg, 703-256-9420

12 noon Fairfax City Day (VFX)

Oakton Regional Library
10304 Lynnhaven Pl., Oakton 22124
Contact: Bobby, 703-938-1436

12 noon, Vienna (VFX)

Oakton Regional Library
10304 Lynnhaven Pl.
Oakton 22124
Contact: Anne, 703-938-7304

7:45 p.m. Mt. Vernon Evening

Paul Spring Retirement Community
Mt. Vernon Room
7116 Fort Hunt Road
Alexandria 22307
Contact: Susan 703-780-3902

Monday, June 13

1:30 p.m. Greenspring (GSP)

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

Have a Great Summer!

(Look for your next *VOTER* in August.)



The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA)
 4026 Hummer Road, Suite #214 Annandale, VA 22003-2403
 703-658-9150. Web address: www.lwv-fairfax.org

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 June, 2011**

**Jane E. George, 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.

LWVFA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
 (Dues year is July 1 through June 30. Current dues year ends June 30, 2011.)

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) _____ (W) _____ 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"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Problems	

Mail to: LWVFA, 4026 Hummer Road, Suite 214, Annandale, VA 22003