



Fairfax VOTER

Elections Have Consequences – Part I

How many times have you heard people say: “My vote won’t make a difference; I only vote in presidential elections”? To League members, those excuses are intolerable; we **know** voting **does** make a difference, but did you know that “who” votes can make an even bigger difference?

In this two-part series on “Elections Have Consequences,” we will delve into some of the causes and effects of voter turnout, both nationally and locally, concentrating on Virginia’s elections—in order to explain how important it is to vote in local and statewide elections. “All politics is local” has more meaning than you might realize. In September, we explain the “why” and in October, we will concentrate on “how” you can use this information along with League issues to query the candidates in the upcoming election. Enjoy the discussion!



Calendar

August 2017

- 23 Candidate forum for at-large School Board member
- 26 Women’s Equality Day:
19th Amendment ratified
- 26 **Fall Kick Off and Briefing**
- 26 Last day for in-person absentee voting for at-large School Board position
- 29 Special Election for at-large School Board position.
- 29 Deadline to register or update registration for Fairfax City Special Election

September 2017

- 1-30 Virginia Voter Registration Month**
 - 4 *Fairfax VOTER* deadline
 - 8 LWNCA Board meeting
 - 11-14 LWVFA unit meetings**
 - 11 Televised candidate forum for eastern region House of Delegates
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Presidents' Message



Welcome back! We hope all of you had a wonderful and restful summer because our League activities and election season are in full swing!

Thank you, Charleen Deasy and Mary Valder, for a successful kick off, and thank you to the many volunteers who worked on the documents for this event.

Thank you to Sherry Zachry for the program in this *Voter*: "Elections Have Consequences." This will be a major theme for us throughout the year in our forum events as well as *Voter* articles and studies. Next month, the program topic will continue with "Elections Have Consequences: Part II."

September promises to be a busy month. Four Candidate Forums are scheduled for September and three in October. Candidate forums are central to our mission of educating voters about the candidates running for office and the important issues of the day. WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH STAFFING THESE FORUMS. To volunteer, please sign up at: <https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/candidateforums/>. Thank you, Peggy Knight and Sidney Johnson, for organizing these forums.

Bob Meredith, our voter registration chair, is scheduling lots of voter registration and election education booths at community colleges, adult education schools, and other locations. Please get in on the action, and volunteer. For a listing of locations and times, please sign up at: <https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/voter-registration/>. If you have questions, please email Bob at VoterRegistration@lwv-fairfax.org.

On top of that, we have two community elections this month:

- **Sept. 24:** Fairfax Cable Access Corp Election, 2929 Eskridge Road, Suite S, Fairfax, VA 22031.
- **Sept. 29:** Reston Community Center Election at 5 p.m. 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston, VA 20191

Community elections are our major fundraisers. WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH STAFFING THESE ELECTIONS. To volunteer, please sign up at: <http://www.signupgenius.com/tabs/23676da05a1cfe9c24-2017elections>.

If you live in Fairfax City, there is a special election for an

open council seat. Polling places will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sept. 12th. Congratulations to our new, incoming Board of Directors. Thank you to our outgoing Board members—Pat Nelson-Douvelis and Sheila Iskra—for your years of service on the Board and your many contributions to the League. Thank you, Peggy Knight, for your wonderful work as co-president. We are delighted that you are continuing on the Board of Directors.

We look forward to seeing you at many of this month's events!

Wendy & Judy

(Calendar, Con't from Page 1.)

- 12 Fairfax City Special Election for an open Council seat
- 17 Candidate forum: western region Delegates
- 18 Televised candidate forum: central region House of Delegates
- 20 **LWVFA Board meeting**
- 22 In-person absentee voting for Nov. begins
- 22 LWV-VA fall workshops, Fredericksburg
- 23 Reston Multicultural Festival
- 24 Fairfax Cable Access Corp. community election
- 24-30 Northern Virginia Voter Registration Week
- 26 LWVUS National Voter Registration Day

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2017 - 2018

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The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area
4026-B Hummer Road
Annandale, VA 22003-2403
703-658-9150 (Info/fax/answering machine)
www.lwv-fairfax.org league@lwv-fairfax.org

Co-Presidents: Wendy Fox-Grage 703-319-4114
wendy.foxgrage@gmail.com
Judy Helein 703-725-9401
judithhelein@aol.com
Editor: Ron Page 703-690-0908
pagegolfer@cox.net
Content Editor: Liz Brooke 703-281-3380
lizbrooke@cox.net

Subscriptions to the *Fairfax VOTER* are available to non-Fairfax League members for \$15 per annum. Send your check to the above address and request a subscription.

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

Feedback on May's Discussion of Dillon's Rule

Compiled by: Diana Willers & Sherry Zachry

The Dillon Rule was the focus of May's unit discussions. Members, new and less new, found value in reviewing the Dillon Rule and the effects it has in Virginia on local governments. Many units responded that all the information was new and relevant.

The power struggle between northern Virginia municipalities and state government over education, taxes, referenda, transportation, and social issues remains of key interest to LWVFA.

REGARDING QUESTION 8: *What do you think of the suggestion that we (LWVFA) establish our own moratorium on studying government and devote more resources to issues and getting people to vote on the issues?(i.e., no more Dillon's Rule articles!)* Responses to Question 8 were varied, with a minority thinking we've done enough; but the majority did not want to rule out further updates on Dillon's Rule. Here is a sampling of comments:

- Part of our mission is education, so we need to continue studying the Dillon Rule. By becoming

more knowledgeable one knows when it is being used incorrectly or as an excuse. New members may not know about the Dillon Rule. Even older members need updates or a refresher on the Dillon Rule.

- There was some discussion about whether Dillon's Rule is a quick excuse to why we are not successful with some of our [League] issues. For example, did the meals tax fail because of the Dillon Rule [requiring that Fairfax County hold a referendum]? Or, were there other factors [such as, would better communication about the importance of a meals tax have made a difference]?
- We need to do some of both. Articles like these really increase our knowledge and hopefully we can then disseminate some of this knowledge.
- What can we do now? Challenge when one hears the Dillon Rule being used as an excuse or incorrectly.

The bottom line is that the Dillon Rule still plays a role in Virginia politics and, thus, remains important to the League's education goals. Nevertheless, it was the opinion of many that the League needs to put that education into action by ensuring voter knowledge and holding candidates accountable without allowing them to dodge behind the Dillon Rule.

“Do Your Own Thing” - Feedback on June's Discussion

By Charleen Deasy, Unit Coordinator & Sherry Zachry, Program Director

We thought you may enjoy reading about all the different things that LWVFA's 10 unit groups did during June's "Units Choice" meetings. Many thanks to those who planned within their unit – units know best their locality and what is important to the unit members. Please feel free to contact a unit to get more information on how the planning and scheduling was accomplished; there will be more unit choice months in the 2017-18 LWVFA program year.

FXV - The Fairfax-Vienna unit had an EXCELLENT do-your-own-thing meeting with a speaker on the opioid epidemic! Our guest was Nhat Nguyen, the Clinical Director at the Fairfax/Falls Church CSB.

SPF -The Springfield unit had Bob Meredith come and speak about voter registration options, etc. This was really helpful and much appreciated.

RD - Reston Day Unit reflected on years of League membership, talking for almost two hours, just enjoying each other's company. We intend to do this again in July and in August.

MVE - the Mount Vernon Evening Unit expanded their knowledge of fracking by watching and discussing the video "Fracking Nation." What struck the group about the film was the Russian connection in 2012 (when the film was released) and that the issue of fracking needs more study ,especially with the possible connection with earthquakes.

MVD - Mount Vernon Day unit did a "field trip." Unit members received a warm welcome from the Fairfax County Sheriff's office and had an incredible tour. This is VERY worthwhile and Unit Chair, Diana Willers, would recommend it to any LWVFA unit.

MCL - McLean Unit members met with Supervisor Foust on June 14 at his office location. Several topics were covered including budget, transportation, land use, affordable housing, opioids treatment issue and Diversion First.

(June Con't Page 6, Col 1)



Fairfax County Candidate Forums Virginia House of Delegates November 2017 Election

In-Person Forums: Public Welcome!



Region	Time/Date	Location
Western (Dist. 34, 36, 40, 48, 67, 86)	2:30 p.m. Sunday, 9/17/2017	Reston Community Center Hunters Woods Village Center 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston, VA 20191
Central (Dist. 35, 37, 41, 42, 53)	7 p.m. Thursday, 9/28/2017	Providence Community Center 3001 Vaden Drive, Fairfax, VA 22031
Eastern (Dist. 38, 39, 43, 44, 45, 49)	7 p.m. Thursday, 10/12/2017	Hayfield Secondary School, Lecture Hall 7630 Telegraph Road, Alexandria, VA 22315
Sully* (Dist. 36, 37, 40, 67, 86)	7:30 p.m. Wednesday, 10/25/2017	Sully Government Center 4900 Stonecroft Blvd., Chantilly, VA 20151



All certified candidates campaigning for office in their respective districts have been invited. A question-and-answer session will be followed by informal conversations with individual candidates.



Televised Forums: Questions by e-mail or phone

The forums at Fairfax County Public Access are not open to the public for in-person participation. Please submit questions by e-mail to theinsidescooptv@gmail.com or call 571-749-1142 between 7:00 PM and 8:30 PM during the program. Watch on Channel 10 or livestream on YouTube. Search "Inside Scoop Livestream" on the night of the event.

Region	Time/Date
Eastern (Dist. 38, 39, 43, 44, 45, 49)	8:00 pm, Monday, 9/11/2017
Central (Dist. 35, 37, 41, 42, 53)	8:00 pm, Monday, 9/18/2017
Western (Dist. 34, 36, 40, 48, 67, 86)	8:00 pm, Monday, 10/2/2017



- **Need to know which District you live in?**
- **Need to check that your registration is up-to-date?**



Visit the VA Board of Elections Citizen's Portal:
<http://www.elections.virginia.gov/citizen-portal/index.html>



For any other questions please email: league@lwv-fairfax.org

Sponsored by: League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area; Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (Zeta Upsilon Lambda Chapter); American Association of University Women of VA; Fairfax County Council Parent Teacher Association; NAACP of Fairfax County; Voice of Vietnamese Americans; and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (Omicron Theta Zeta Chapter)

Elections Have Consequences – Part I

By Therese Martin and Sherry Zachry

Introduction

How many times have you heard people say: “My vote won’t make a difference; I only vote in presidential elections; I don’t know who those people on the ballot are so I’m not going to vote” (especially in local elections)? To League members those excuses are intolerable. Our mantra of: “Democracy Is **Not** a Spectator Sport!” rings loudly in our ears and we redouble our efforts for “Making Democracy Work”® in our communities through voter education about candidates, the issues, and the voting process.

After all, we know voting **does** make a difference. Research shows that who and how many people vote in a particular election can bring about results that differ greatly from predicted outcomes. Think of the 2016 presidential election and the June 2017 gubernatorial primaries in Virginia (just to name two), which defied both conventional wisdom and prognosticators’ predictions.

Voting in state and local elections historically has lower voter turnout rates nationwide compared with presidential elections, and yet those elections are the ones that most affect our daily lives—and sometimes are decided by very close votes. Even in presidential elections, the U.S. ranks 28th globally among developed democracies.

In this two-part series on “Elections Have Consequences,” we will delve into some of the causes and effects of voter turnout, both nationally and locally, concentrating on Virginia’s elections—which occur every November and May (for most town and city elections). We will look at the Commonwealth’s voting traditions and practices, including changing electoral laws through the years, to explain how important it is to vote in local and statewide elections; and how these elections can determine long-term policies—which gives credence to the phrase: “All politics is local.” If only people would understand that and “vote local.”

In September, we explain the “why” and in October, we will concentrate on “how” this information applies to the upcoming election and “how” you can use League issues to query the candidates on their positions. We hope to do this in “real time” at the many candidate events that LWVFA is sponsoring in September and October. The Nov. 7, 2017, General Election will not only determine Virginia’s next governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general; it will determine all 100 seats in the VA House of Delegates for the 2018 and 2019 General Assembly sessions.

Voter Turnout in the United States

In his May 15, 2017, article for the Pew Research Center, “U.S. Trails Most Developed Countries In Voter Turnout,”

Drew Desilver says:

About 55.7% of the U.S. voting-age population cast ballots in the 2016 presidential election, according

to newly released Census Bureau figures— a slight uptick compared with 2012, but less than the record year of 2008 and well below turnout levels typical in most other developed democracies.

The 55.7% VAP [voting age population] turnout in last year’s election puts the U.S. behind most of its peers in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD, <http://www.oecd.org/>], most of whose members are highly developed, democratic states. Looking at the most recent nationwide election in each of the 35 OECD member nations, the U.S. placed 28th. . . .

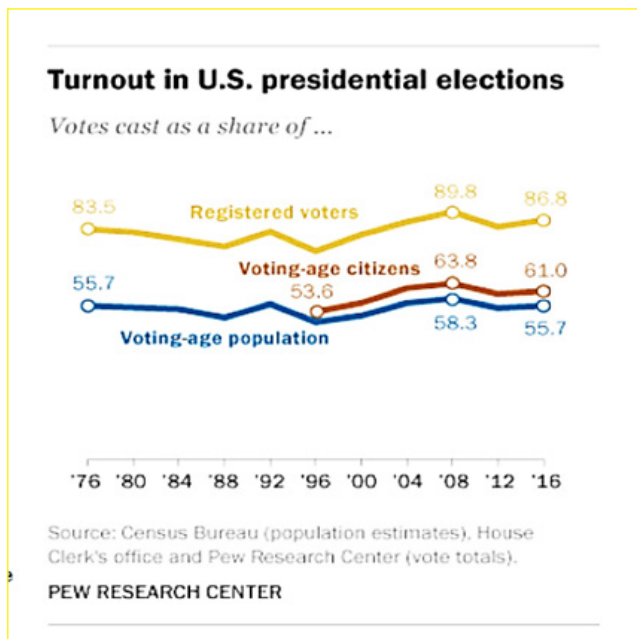
The highest turnout rates among OECD nations were in Belgium (87.2%), Sweden (82.6%) and Denmark (80.3%). . . . On the other hand, Switzerland consistently has the lowest turnout in the OECD: In the 2015 Swiss legislative elections, less than 39% of the voting-age population cast ballots. ¹

Why the U.S. turnout trails other developed democracies is a topic for another article (although, among other things, there seems to be a relationship between countries that have government automatic voter registration—high



turnout—and countries like the U.S. where registration is voter initiated—lower turnout). According to Desilver, U.S. turnout rates have been consistent:

However measured, U.S. turnout rates have been fairly consistent over the past several decades, despite some election-to-election variation. Since 1976, voting-age turnout has remained within an 8.5-percentage-point range – from just under 50% in 1996, when Bill Clinton was re-elected, to just over 58% in 2008, when Barack Obama won the White House. However, turnout varies considerably among different racial, ethnic and age groups during those years.²



Desilver's statement about turnout varying among racial, ethnic, and age groups during the years cites research compiled by authors Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez for the Pew FactTank [May 12, 2017]. They detail some of the differences that occurred in the 2016 election, in "Black Voter Turnout Fell in 2016 Even as a Record Number of Americans Cast Ballots." A very brief summary of their interesting findings follows:

A record 137.5 million Americans voted in the 2016 presidential election, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau. [Note: Census Bureau uses a different metric for counting votes, see citation below]

. . . Overall voter turnout – defined as the share of adult U.S. citizens who cast ballots [not VAP] – was 61.4% in 2016, a share similar to 2012 but

below the 63.6% who say they voted in 2008 . . . A number of long-standing trends in presidential elections either reversed or stalled in 2016, as black voter turnout decreased, white turnout increased and the nonwhite share of the U.S. electorate remained flat since the 2012 election.

Some overall statistics that Krogstad and Lopez mention are:

- The black voter turnout rate declined for the first time in 20 years in a presidential election, falling to 59.6% in 2016 after reaching a record-high 66.6% in 2012.
- The Latino voter turnout rate held steady at 47.6% in 2016, compared with 48.0% in 2012.
- The number of naturalized-citizen voters reached 10.8 million in 2016, up from 9.3 million in 2012
- Blacks, Hispanics, Asians and other racial or ethnic minorities accounted for 26.7% of voters in 2016, a share unchanged from 2012.
- The voter turnout rate increased among Millennials and those in Generation X.
- The voter turnout rate among women was 63.3% in 2016, mostly unchanged from 63.7% in 2012. [increased among white women; decreased among black women].⁴

NOTE: If you wish to further explore the Census Bureau's 2016 election findings and how they calculate voter turnout quoted in Krogstad and Lopez's article, go to: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-580.html> (last revised May 2017).

Another explanation for turnout changes from 2012 to 2016 mentioned in various media is that 2016 was the first election since the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* that found Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was unconstitutional. In a 5-4 decision announced on June 25, 2013, the Court invalidated Section 4 which had provided the basis for implementing Section 5 and its requirement of prior federal approval in specified states and jurisdictions for any election law changes.

Michael D. Regan noted in his Nov. 20, 2016, article for PBS News Hour Updates, "What does voter turnout tell us about the 2016 election?" that after the Court's decision, 14 states enacted more restrictive voting laws before the 2016 election, including Wisconsin and Ohio. Further in the article, Neil Albrecht, executive director of the Milwaukee Election Commission, was quoted as saying that voter identification laws hurt turnout in the city's high-poverty

districts, noting that 41,000 fewer people voted there in 2016 than did in 2012.⁵

However, the Brennan Center for Justice, a nonpartisan law and policy institute, said in its Nov. 14, 2016, post “Voting Problems Present in 2016, but Further Study Needed to Determine Impact,” that there has not been enough data collected to determine the new voting laws’ impact on the election.

The data isn’t in yet to assess the impact of restrictive voting laws on the 2016 race, but there’s ample evidence that long lines, malfunctioning machines, and confusion created problems on Election Day.⁶

In October, we will discuss the League’s core value of expanding access to the vote and restoring the VRA. Also we will cite legislation that has been introduced in the Virginia General Assembly that proposed to further hinder access to the vote, as well as legislation trying to expand access.

Virginia’s Voting Record

In presidential years, Virginians have turned out in the past three cycles with higher percentages than the U.S. total turnout. Voting percentages in the last presidential elections were 74.0 percent in 2008, 71.06 percent in 2012, and 72.05 percent in 2016, according to the VA Department of Elections,

www.elections.virginia.gov. They compare turnout by the number of registered voters — not by the number of voters who are 18—or VAP.⁷ These seem like pretty good statistics, but when turnout is measured by voting age residents (VAP), the 2016 number

is reduced to 60.9 percent—not much more than the 55.7 percent total U.S. turnout mentioned earlier in this article.

It is in “off-year” elections when turnout declines even more, as it does in all 50 states. In most states, “off-year” means November general elections in the years that are NOT presidential election years (every two or three years), but in Virginia, “off-year” means **every year** except presidential years! Why does Virginia hold elections every year? Believe it or not, it was designed that way back in the day, when one party (Democratic) dominated Virginia politics under the control of Harry F. Byrd, Sr., from 1924 until 1956 (the peak of Byrd’s dominance). Byrd’s goal was to minimize competition in non-presidential election years when voter turnout would be low, especially in local election years (year 4), allowing certain candidates more likely to be elected. (*That still happens in 2017.*)

Although many of the voting procedures and protocols designed to keep segregation in place during the years of Byrd’s dominance – including restrictions on how, when, and where Virginians could register to vote—have been eliminated by 2017 through federal law or judicial edict as discriminatory, one old practice remains today: Virginia’s electoral calendar, which schedules general elections **every November**. According to this schedule: presidents and members of Congress (year 1); governor and statewide officials and delegates (year 2); U.S. Senate and House of

*Chart with statistics for Presidential and Off Year elections - 2006-2016
(Percentage of registered voters by VA Dept. of Elections)*

Year	Registered Voters	Total Voters	Percentages
Year 1: (Presidential Elections, House of Representatives & sometimes *one U.S. Senate seat.)			
2016	5,529,742	3,984,631	72.05%
2012*	5,428,833	3,858,043	71.06%
2008*	5,034,660	3,723,260	74.00%
Year 2: (Governor, statewide officials and VA Delegates)			
2013	5,240,286	2,253,418	43.00%
2009	4,955,750	2,000,812	40.40%
2005	4,452,225	2,000,052	45.00%
Year 3: (US Senate and House of Representatives, the Senate seat not in Presidential years)			
2014	5,281,011	2,194,346	41.60%
2010	5,032,144	2,214,503	44.01%
2006	4,554,683	2,398,589	52.70%
Year 4: (All local and state legislative seats)			
2015	5,196,436	1,509,864	29.10%
2011	5,116,929	1,463,761	28.61%
2007	4,549,864	1,374,526	30.20%

SOURCE: Virginia Department of Elections⁷

*One U.S. Senate seat in a Presidential election year

Representatives (year 3); and all local and state legislative seats (year 4), although town and city elections can also be in May. Sometimes the election of one U.S. Senator also occurs in a presidential year.

Jeff Schapiro, political writer for the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, in his June 16, 2015, editorial, “Low primary turnout would have thrilled Byrd,” about the low turnout in the June 9, 2015 primary for state delegates and senators (year 4), explained it this way:

But it was the overall turnout [in non-presidential years] that would have tickled Byrd, a politician whose power relied on keeping the electorate small and, therefore, manageable.

Byrd quite literally had the law on his side. The Virginia Constitution in 1902 disenfranchised blacks and poor whites by requiring a \$1.50 poll tax that had to be paid six months before the Democratic primary, which in the Old South was tantamount to election. Byrd’s goal was to minimize competition. That kept him and his like-minded conservative white guys in control for 50 years.

Further in the editorial Schapiro observes that in the Old Dominion, the gubernatorial election (year 2) is the big deal, based on an 1851 constitutional directive:

The timing of the gubernatorial election, still the main event in these parts, and the chief executive’s four-year, nonrenewable term date to an even earlier Virginia Constitution, adopted in 1851.⁸

Virginia Turnout in General Elections

Although Virginia voter turnout in presidential elections was fairly low (18-31 percent) before 1968, when it reached 50 percent (as federal civil rights protections for African-Americans kicked in), it has risen to above 70 percent in the past three presidential cycles. However, the participation drops off precipitously (to 45 percent or less) in the off-year general elections of the next three years (especially in year 4), just as Byrd knew.

Turnout in Primaries

Turnout for Virginia’s 2015 primary election for local and state legislative seats was just under 8 percent of registered voters; the 2016 presidential primary on March 1, 2016, was 784,635 (15 percent) in the Democratic primary, and 1,025,191 (19 percent) in the Republican primary, for a total turnout of 34 percent of registered voters in March, 2016. The June 13, 2017, Democratic and Republican primaries for governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general (and some delegate seats) had an overall turnout of 872,633, or 16.75 percent of registered voters, relatively low turnout

figures.

Primary elections traditionally have the lowest turnout despite the fact that the primary (or another method) determines whose names will be on the ballot in November. This is a case where “who” votes can sway the outcome. Using the June 2017 primary as an example, the total vote was 872,633, of which 507,813 voted the Democratic ballot and 364,820 voted the Republican ballot. The lower turnout in the Republican primary had interesting consequences.

Because fewer people voted in the Republican primary, the margin of victory was greatly affected for the gubernatorial candidate winner, Ed Gillespie, who won by just 4,500 votes (43.7 percent) over Corey Stewart who got 42.5 percent of the vote. A *Washington Post* article by Gregory Schneider about the primary results pointed out that pre-election polls had given Gillespie a huge lead, but a low turnout among Republican voters gave Stewart’s committed base an outsized influence, and the third candidate, Frank Wagner who received 13.8 percent of the vote, drew significant votes in Hampton Roads that might otherwise have gone to Gillespie. This seems to be a prime example of who votes and overall voter turnout creating unforeseen results.

Conversely, over 100,000 more people voted in the Democratic primary, which resulted in Ralph Northam winning 55.9 percent of the vote, compared with Tom Perriello’s 44.1 percent. That race was predicted to be much closer with a lot of out-of-state money pouring in for both candidates. The above *Washington Post* article quoted voters who said they voted because of events in Washington D.C., with one voter declaring he had never before voted in a gubernatorial primary but decided this year was too important to miss.⁹

Primaries vs. Conventions or Caucuses in Virginia

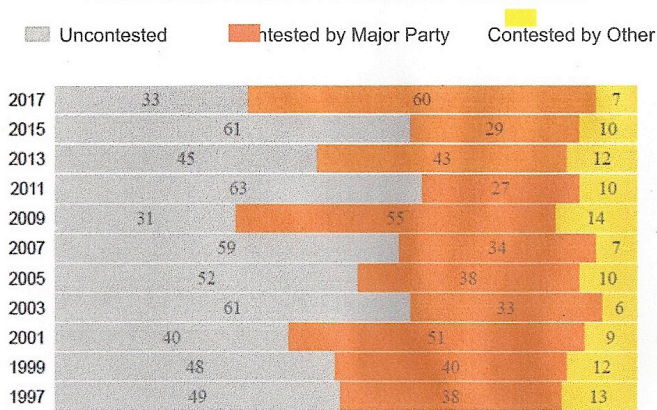
Primaries are not the only method for selecting a standard-bearer for the party; there can be caucuses (mass meetings), or a party canvass (“firehouse caucus” in Virginia), or conventions. The caucuses and conventions are private events run by the state political parties who set the rules for participation and procedures. Whether to use a caucus, convention, or primary is the decision of the state party; one party can hold a primary and the other party can hold a caucus—again, the decision is up to the party.

In 2009 and 2013, the Virginia Republican Party used conventions to nominate its candidates for governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general. A convention includes a process for selecting delegates, and then only the delegates may vote; this process has been criticized as favoring “party insiders” and disfavoring moderate

candidates. Conventions and caucuses also eliminate the “crossover” voting that can occur in Virginia’s open primaries, where voters do not register by party affiliation and can vote in either primary by requesting that party’s ballot at the poll. Ken Cuccinelli, who the *Washington Post* once described as “one of the most conservative members of the General Assembly,” became the Republican Party nominee for state attorney general in 2009 and for governor in 2013 using the convention process. In 2013, when the party changed from holding a primary (as was previously announced) to holding a convention after Cuccinelli decided to run for governor, the more moderate candidate, then-Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling, dropped out of the race, thus ensuring Cucillnelli’s nomination.¹⁰

Looking Forward to the 2017 General Elections

Historic Trends: Contested v. Uncontested House Elections



SOURCE: <http://www.vpap.org/elections/house/historic/>¹¹

In the upcoming 2017 House of Delegate races, more seats are being contested than have been since the 2009 election (*see chart*), with 67 of the 100 seats contested—60 by major party candidates. Most media outlets in Virginia (and nationwide) say this phenomenon is a direct result of the 2016 presidential election. Whatever the results of the statewide and delegates elections, they are sure to be analyzed extensively to determine the effects the statewide and delegate elections had on each other, the impact of the 2016 presidential election, and the extent to which the earlier lack of competition was due to gerrymandering, or a lack of interest on the part of voters, or finances on the part of potential candidates – among many other possibilities.

The Importance of State and Local Elections in Virginia: Redistricting¹²

This topic will be addressed in more depth in the October material (“Elections Have Consequences-Part II”), but this month we want to look at one of the most obvious, but not always discussed, reasons to vote in state and local

elections: state legislatures are responsible for adopting the redistricting plans used for both their own members (senators and delegates) and for the U.S. Congress.

As is often the case in LWV studies, we find that information from one set of issues affects other issues of LWV concern. So it is with redistricting and voter turnout. Anyone reading about elections and voting in the popular press in recent years has learned how the Republican Party concentrated its efforts and was able to position itself to control the redistricting process in a majority of states during the redistricting process following the Census in 2000 and 2010, thus engaging in partisan gerrymandering to design non-competitive districts favoring their party. We must note here that the same partisan gerrymandering is used by the Democrats in Democratically-controlled state legislatures such as Maryland; however it would appear that the Democrats may have been outmaneuvered.

By November 2016 the Republican Party controlled both houses of the state legislature in 32 (33 including Nebraska) states compared with just 13 for the Democrats. In 25 states they also controlled the governorship, compared with just 6 for the Democrats. Their attention to, and success in, many state elections for governors and legislators paid off, resulting in the current imbalance of the statewide popular vote for members of Congress and state representatives compared with the actual numbers of such offices held by each party in many states. Virginia was one of those states.

After a relatively balanced political party split in the Virginia Senate in the mid-1990s, the Republicans picked up seats in 1998, 1999, and 2000 to take control of that body in time for the 2001 redistricting session. The close party split continued through the following decade, allowing the Republican Governor and overwhelming Republican majority in the House of Delegates to call the shots again in the 2011 redistricting process.

Although the Democrats in the Virginia House of Delegates began the 1990s with a working majority, the control of the House had switched to the Republicans by the time of the 2001 redistricting session and increased even further by the time of the 2011 redistricting session, when a Republican was in the governor’s seat. The aim of both parties will be to control the redistricting process in 2021 unless a nonpartisan redistricting process—which has long been bottled up by the House of Delegates—is adopted by that time.

The impact of Virginia’s partisan redistricting on the number of non-competitive districts has been discussed by our

LWV many times, but not that often in connection with low voter turnout in the off-year elections. Data for recent years confirm the validity of Kenneth Stroupe, Jr.'s observation in a 2009 University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center publication:

Low Voter Turnout. Perhaps the worst news from all this is that this decade's dismal levels of competition in state legislative elections and the lack of options for voters at the ballot box appear to have negatively affected voter participation in these elections. During the two state legislative elections this decade where both the House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia were on the ballot simultaneously, voter turnout was dramatically lower— seven to twelve percentage points depending on the particular election—in districts where voters had no options compared to those where there was a viable contested race.¹³

The redistricting plans enacted in recent decades for the General Assembly resulted in planned non-competitive districts for the General Assembly, which effectively reduced both actual competition and voter participation.

In all Virginia elections since 2000, those for General Assembly With local elections had lowest turnout – 31 percent and lower. And with one exception, the turnout in other years has exceeded 50 percent (of registered voters) **only** in presidential election years. The one exception was the Congressional mid-term elections in 2006 when there was major party competition for eight of Virginia's 11 congressional seats and a highly competitive statewide race for the U.S. Senate (Jim Webb v. George Allen).

Virginia's turnout of 41.6 percent (of registered voters) in the 2014 mid-term congressional elections was right in line with the national turnout of 42 percent that year – the lowest since 1942. Two other Virginia mid-term elections during the last 25 years (2 ½ decades) have experienced lower turnout, and all three of the following demonstrate the effect of the lack of competition on voter turnout:

- In 1998, the 33 percent turnout was likely due to the fact that there was no contest for the U.S. Senate on the ballot and no major party competition for seven of Virginia's 11 congressional seats.
- In 2002, the turnout was 39.4 percent and was also likely due to the lack of a contest for the U.S. Senate on the ballot that year and no major party competition for six of Virginia's 11 congressional seats.
- In the 2014 elections, when the turnout was 41.6 percent, the total vote for congressional candidates in two districts without major party competition was 26,000 less than the turnout four years earlier when

there was major party competition. One of those districts was the majority-minority 3rd Congressional District where the vote dropped by over 170,000 from the presidential election just two years earlier.

Yes, one effect of Virginia's gerrymandered districts is a lack of competitiveness that then plays an important role in our low voter turnout. Low turnout can affect election results, not only in the specific election itself, but in the up- and down- ticket races. Consider the above-cited mid-term elections of 2014, when Virginia's 11 congressional seats and the Senate race between Mark Warner and Ed Gillespie were on the ballot. The lack of major party opposition in the 3rd (Scott-D) and 9th (Griffith-R) Congressional Districts resulted in a significant drop-off in voter turnout in both districts. However, the drop-off in the Democratic vote in the 3rd Congressional District exceeded the drop-off in the Republican vote in the 9th Congressional District by over 52,000 (120,002 minus 67,417). This is certainly one reason why the margin of Warner's statewide victory over Gillespie was fewer than 18,000 votes.

We can probably cite many other specific and general instances of how Virginia's gerrymandered districts have resulted in less competition, lower voter turnout, more likelihood of affecting other elections on the ballot in an election year, and less likelihood for the majority party winners to support any change in the redistricting process. But the foregoing gives you a clear picture of how gerrymandered districts affect voter turnout.

As mentioned earlier in this article, Virginians voting for members of the House of Delegates this year will find a significant increase in the number of competitive races. The League of Women Voters is hopeful that the increased competitiveness will signify a new trend that will also include a significant increase in voter turnout. LWVFA will be watching this and report back after the November 2017 General Election.

Coming in October

In October's Part II of "Elections Have Consequences" we will look at instances where very close elections (brought about in part by low turnout) determined Virginia's future legislation and social policies, and in one four-year term, how the results of that close election reversed several of the previous administration's legislative and judicial actions. We also will explore specific legislation that has passed the General Assembly in recent years along with what failed (and at which point in the process it failed), concentrating on

legislation that is/was directly tied to League positions and advocacy. We hope to gather your questions to be asked of the 2017 candidates as to where they stand on those specific League issues. More to come...

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12. The election results and other data in this section can be found in and calculated from material on the web site of the Virginia Department of Elections, www.vote.Virginia.gov. The structure of the site and amount and presentation of election reports and results have recently changed, and are likely to continue to do so. Many of the comparisons discussed in this section were calculated from material that can be found at: <http://historical.elections.virginia.gov/>.
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Discussion Questions

1. What, if anything, did you learn **new** about (a) Virginia elections; and (b) voter turnout and its consequences?
2. Were you surprised by any of the voter turnout statistics (globally, U.S. or in Virginia)? Explain why or why not.
3. What do you think of Virginia's electoral calendar of having an election **every year and sometimes twice a year**, when there are May local town and city elections and November general elections—or even more than that when there are primaries and special elections in the same year? Do you think that voter turnout in Virginia is affected by the number of elections? Would you recommend anything different?
4. What do you think of the primary process in Virginia? Compare it with other candidate selection methods used in Virginia or in other states.
5. Can you explain how state elections affect the redistricting process?
6. What questions would you like to ask the candidates running in the November 7 General Election? (Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, and Delegate candidates) [*We will collect your questions and ask them at LWVFA candidate forums*]
7. What else do you want to know about this topic?

LWV-VA Announces 2017 Fall Workshops

Friday, September 22, 2017
Hospitality House
Hotel and Conference Center
2800 Plank Rd, Fredericksburg VA

The morning session topics will include LWV 101 - parliamentary procedures, Robert's Rules, Resolutions, Caucuses, adoption of positions, program studies and task forces - especially designed for new members and those that need a refresher.

Lunch will provide an opportunity for small functional interest group discussions. This will be followed by three workshops that will be given twice to provide Leaguers a chance to attend more than one session. Watch for more information in *The Virginia Voter*.

Fairfax County's New Environmental Plan

By Elizabeth Lonoff, Environmental Coordinator

The Board of Supervisors (BOS) adopted the new Environmental Vision on June 20th. It will help guide the County in protecting the local environment and developing models of sustainability for continued growth. See fairfaxcounty.gov/living/environment/environmentalvision.htm for the report and its development.

This milestone was celebrated at the July 22nd Environmental Showcase (watch for video at fairfaxcounty.gov/chairman/). BOS Chair Sharon Bulova remarked that the County reduced greenhouse gas emissions from public buildings by 21 percent from 2006 to 2015 even though County properties grew in square footage. Also, most Fairfax Connector buses are "mini-hybrids," which use engine cooling systems to reduce emissions and save fuel. However, the government's share is nominal compared with business and residential emissions.

Bulova also noted that the County's goal to increase tree cover in Fairfax County by 45 percent by 2037 has been exceeded. In addition, the Park Authority has reported nearing the goal of preserving 10 percent of all land in the County, with 1,864 acres more to go.

U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly, the Chair when the original Vision was adopted, praised the Board for adopting a resolution to sign on to the National Climate Action Agenda to uphold the standards agreed upon at the Paris Climate Summit.

Environmental Coordinator Kambiz Agazi identified some of the changes made to the first Vision and pointed to a future inventory of environmental impact and improvements. Among the sustainability and innovation presentations, architect Steve Smith said cars will become small and autonomous, including self-parking. He showed a diagram of four Smart cars parked in one space next to a pickup truck. Between that and fewer people driving to work, he predicted that corporate garages would become white elephants needing to be re-purposed. Perhaps you've noticed the similar revitalization of some industrial parks.

Want to help turn the Vision into action? Contact your District Supervisor. Each district has one or more committees for land use, etc., as well as a seat on Board advisory groups like the Tree Commission. If you'd like to represent the LWVFA on such a group, please contact one of our Co-Presidents, Wendy or Judy.

Congratulations to Area Groups That Won 2017 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award

Among the Governor's 2017 Environmental Excellence Award winners were Alexandria Renew Enterprises for its sustainability and environmental program, the Fairfax County Park Authority for Huntley Meadows Park wetlands restoration, and Massimo Zanetti Beverage USA for its fully-compostable single-serve coffee pod.

David Stapleton, Assistant Park Manager of Mason Neck State Park, received the Mason Neck Citizens Associations' Citizen of the Year award for making a significant contribution to the preservation of the historic, archaeological, and environmental resources of Mason Neck. He's been a key figure there for the last 25 years.

In June, the Fairfax County Park Authority celebrated installing environmental upgrades at Royal Lake Park. That completed the Pohick Dams project to meet current dam standards and restore the sediment pool of the lakes formed by dams in four parks. Part of the Chesapeake Bay cleanup, this project provides water quality benefits and facilitates future maintenance dredging.

Sue Beffel, Doug Britt, Don Coram, Robin Duska, Linda Fuller, Carl Mitchell, Lois Phemister, Claudia Thompson-Deahl, and Katie Shaw compiled the first Reston Association State of the Environment Report, an impressive, comprehensive inventory of Reston's environment and natural resources. In accepting the report in July, the board of directors planned a fall discussion to prioritize the management recommendations.



Domestic Violence Hotline
(703) 360-7273

League Plans for Voter Registration and Education

By Sidney Johnson, Voter Service

Fall 2017 voter registration will be carried out in the same venues used in the past while adding locations that serve under-represented communities. Activities will be starting after Labor Day and conclude prior to the October 16th voter registration deadline. We will continue to partner with service fraternities and sororities, AAUW and other organizations. We now have two iPads to offer online registration at our tables.

We'll give away plenty of this year's edition of "What's On the Ballot," a crucial tool in this gubernatorial election year, when we also choose the delegates who will make decisions about issues such as redistricting reform, transportation funding, firearm safety, and schools.

Locations include:

- Adult high schools, Pimmit and Woodson centers
- Starbucks, Pan Am Shopping Center
- The Herndon Neighborhood Resource Center

County Executive Retires After 40 Years of Service

Fairfax County Executive Ed Long will retire on September 15th. He began his service with the County in 1977 as a budget analyst and eventually served as Chief Financial Officer before being named to his current position. Highlights of Long's tenure as County Executive have included:

- Major steps toward realizing the vision of a redeveloped Tyson's Corner;
- Adoption of a new compensation plan for County employees;
- Adoption of a new Strategic Plan for Economic Success;
- Hosting the 2015 World Police & Fire Games;
- Adoption of new protocols for police training, response, and transparency;
- Opening of Phase 1 of the Silver Line and keeping Phase 2 to Dulles Airport on track;
- Establishing Diversion First to help first offenders be diverted into treatment rather than incarceration.

- Reston Multicultural Festival
- AND venues found and served by units as their own projects, such as libraries, hospital cafeterias, Metro stations, shopping centers, community centers.

As times/venues are scheduled that information will be placed on SignUpGenius. To access SignUpGenius, go to Volunteers on our website, click on Voter Registration and choose the link for 2017 Voter Registration activities. New activities will be added during the season so please keep checking.

Many new members said they were interested in voter registration activities when they joined. There will be targeted emails to them asking them to take the online training for Third-Party Voter Registration; to identify potential venues (with contact information); and asking them to participate, working with experienced members. We will ask for short time commitments, e.g., a 2-hour shift.

If you find in the listing a table you would like to serve, but the sign-ups have already been filled, go anyway. You will always be welcome, and the tables are an ideal place to learn the skills of voter registration and engage the public.

For questions or difficulties with accessing SignUpGenius, contact Bob Meredith at VoterRegistration@lww-fairfax.org.

Membership Renewals Are Due

Since last fall, LWVFA has experienced a surge in new members. We welcome them and are excited to increase our numbers by nearly 30 percent. However, we want to keep our long-time members as active participants in the League program.

If you haven't already done so, please renew your membership for 2017-2018. Individual memberships remain \$65, households are \$90, and students are \$32.50. We are also willing to consider members' special financial circumstances.

You may renew by check or PayPal. To pay by check, go to the **JOIN** link on our website at <http://www.lww-fairfax.org/join/> and download the membership renewal form. Then mail the form with your check to the League Office. On the same webpage you will also find an automatic renewal option via PayPal. If you use automatic online renewal, your credit card will renew on the same date year after year. There is no need to remember to pay your membership dues in subsequent years. Of course, you can renew for just one year if you choose.

Metro Funding Forum, Sponsored by LWVNCA

Save the Date – October 7, 2017

Where: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

4301 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA 22203

When: Saturday, October 7, time TBD

Why: Get the facts and help design an action plan

On October 7th, the League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area (LWVNCA) is hosting a forum in conjunction with the Coalition for Smarter Growth to create public awareness about the dire situation that currently exists for Metro. The forum will address the need for a dedicated funding source for Metro and discuss ways to achieve this. Please mark your calendars to attend the forum to be held at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, 4301 Wilson Blvd, Arlington (near Ballston-MU Metro Station). Time and panel speakers are still being determined as of this writing (August 7).

A Little Background: Why Metro Is Important to Us

LWVNCA has been involved with Metro since its inception more than 40 years ago. The League realized how important mass transportation was to those living in the Washington, D.C., area and to the development of the economic potential of the region.

We all understand that Metro is a means for moving a large number of people efficiently, but some of the benefits are

less obvious, such as:

- Virginia contributes \$180 million, but revenue generated is in excess of \$600 million.
- 708,000 jobs are within ¼ mile of transit stop or station.
- 45 freeway lanes saved (based upon 477,000 transit trips per workday).
- \$726 million in congestion costs averted annually.
- 35 million hours of delay eliminated.
- Metro brings in businesses.
- Metro improves CO² emissions by reducing the number of cars on the road.
- 86 percent of new office development planned in the D.C. region is within ¼ mile of a Metro station.
- 92 percent of office leases over 20,000 sq. ft. are within ½ mile of Metro station.
- Billions of dollars of property built near Metro generates significant property tax revenue for localities.
- An aging population depends upon Washington-Metropolitan Area Transportation Area for transportation.
- Household transportation costs are second only to housing costs.
- Mass transit helps shape development and leads to more compact and efficient land development/use.
- Mass transit provides labor access to better jobs.
- Mass transit costs less to build and to maintain compared with rural road projects.
- Proximity to Metro increases property values by 6.9 to 9.3 percent.

**PUT THIS DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR AND
PLAN TO ATTEND!**

(June Mtgs. Con't from Page 3, Col. 2)

FCE - LWVFA's newest unit, the Fairfax City Evening unit, held a planning session for several voter service initiatives. The unit worked out plans for a candidate forum for the City of Fairfax special election for City Council.

FXS - Fairfax Station unit had a delightful time discussing the year's program topics and what we liked best (Opioid Addiction-March 2017, Fracking Consensus – Jan & Feb 2017, Electoral College info-Oct. 2016). We talked about gerrymandering/redistricting and the League's emphasis on it, ERA and Turning Point Suffragists' Memorial, upcoming studies or topics, among other things.

RE - The Reston Evening unit organized a panel discussion

open to the public on Fairfax County's "Diversion First" program as it begins its second year of diverting from jail persons with mental illness or developmental disabilities who come into contact with the criminal justice system for low-level offenses.

CC: Chantilly-Centreville's "Do It Yourself" program was a discussion of "*A Nation of Nations: A Great American Immigration Story*" by Tom Gjelten. The book was particularly interesting because some of us had lived in Fairfax County during these years of change.

GSP: For the Greenspring unit's June meeting Co-President Judy Helein came to our June 12th meeting and discussed the future of the League, especially what the impact of the sharp increase in membership this year may be.

Unit Discussion Meeting Locations

Topic: Elections Have Consequences - Part I

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 August 1, 2017, 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, Aug. 26

At-Large Unit and Briefing

Mason Governmental Center
6507 Columbia Pike
Annandale, VA 22003
At-Large Briefing begins at 12:15,
following the Fall Kick-Off
Contact: Sherry, 703-730-8118

Monday, Sept. 11

1:30 p.m. Greenspring (GSP)

Hunters Crossing Classroom
Spring Village Drive
Springfield, VA 22150
Contact: Edith (703) 644-3970 or
Gloria, (703) 852-5113

Wednesday, Sept. 13

9:30 a.m. McLean Day (McL)

StarNut Café
1445 Laughlin Ave.
McLean, VA 22101
Contact: Anjali, (703) 509-5518 or
Sheena, (703) 481-0933

9:45 a.m. Mt. Vernon Day (MVD)

Mt. Vernon Governmental Center
2511 Parkers Lane
Alexandria, VA 22306
Contact: Gail, (703) 360-6561 or
Diane, (703) 704-5325

10 a.m. Fairfax Station (FXS)

8739 Cuttermill Place
Springfield, VA 22153
Contact: Kathleen, 703-644-1555
or Sherry, 703-730-8118

7:15 p.m. Fairfax City Evening (FCE)

The Green Acres Center
Room 112
4401 Sideburn Road
Fairfax VA 22030
Contact: Ellen and Amy,
Fairfaxcityunit@lwv-fairfax.org

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

Hunter Mill District Community
Room
North County Governmental
Center
1801 Cameron Glen Drive
Reston 20190
Contact: Rona, 703-476-5758 or
Rachel, 831-240-6611

Thursday, Sept. 14

9 a.m. Reston Day (RD)

21125 Cardinal Pond Terrace,
#319
Ashburn VA 20147

Contact: Charleen, 703-620-3593

9:30 a.m. Springfield (SPF)

LWVFA Conference Room,
Packard Center
4026-B Hummer Road
Annandale, VA 22003
Contact: Marge, 703-451-0589

10 a.m. Centreville-Chantilly (CCD)

Sully Government Center
4900 Stonecroft Blvd.
Chantilly, VA 20151
Contact: Leslie, 571-213-6384

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

Patrick Henry Library
101 Maple Ave East
Vienna, VA 22180
Contact: Bob, 563-299-5316 or
VoterRegistration@lwv-fairfax.org

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

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

October Meetings:

Elections Have Consequences - Part II



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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Wendy Fox-Grage, Co-President

Judy Helein, Co-President

Ron Page, Editor

Liz Brooke, Content Editor

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

Membership Dues: Individual \$65 _____ Household \$90 (2 persons, 1 Voter) _____ Student \$32.50 _____

Dues year is July 1 – June 30 (A subsidy fund is available; check here _____ and include whatever amount you can afford.)

Membership Status: New _____ Renewing _____ Reinstatement _____ Donation _____

(Dues are not tax deductible. Tax-deductible donations must be written on a separate check or PayPal Payment to “LWVFA Ed Fund.”)

(Please print clearly)

Name _____ Unit (if renewing) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip + 4 _____

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

Please make checks payable to “LWVFA” and mail to: LWVFA, 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale VA 22003-2403

OR Join Online at: www.LWV-Fairfax.org/join.html

I am interested in becoming involved in (please indicate by circling the appropriate bullet(s)):

- **Providing organizational support** (graphics design, website development/maintenance, fundraising/ grant writing).
- **Voter Services** (e.g., voter registration drives, candidate forums, developing Voters’ Guides).
- **Researching/writing about issues in which LWVFA has an interest** (e.g., environment, firearms safety, mental health, schools, domestic violence, criminal justice; or, chairing an LWVFA study committee on voter turnout or human trafficking).
- **Representing the League in governmental fora** (e.g., serving as LWVFA representative on Fairfax County citizens’ committees and agencies, such as affordable housing, Fairfax County Public Schools).
- **Other _____**