

Fairfax VOTER

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CEDAW

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the worldwide human rights norm that promotes women and works to eliminate all discriminatory actions that target and impact women and girls worldwide. Closer to home, CEDAW norms are adopted and applied in U.S. cities and counties from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. The LWVFA has undertaken an educational campaign to inform Fairfax County residents of the merits of CEDAW. A **GUIDEBOOK ON CEDAW** was created and may be viewed, in full, on the LWVFA website. It represents an informative, yet easy-to-read, illustrated guidebook. We continue to reach out to and collaborate with Fairfax County Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to secure a Fairfax County Resolution in support of CEDAW. Please join us in the initiative.

Calendar

Note: LWVFA Units will meet in May

- 1 LWVFA Virtual Briefing and At-Large Meeting, 10 a.m.
- 1 LWVNCA Virtual Annual Convention, 10 a.m.
- 3 *Fairfax Voter* Deadline for the June issue
- 4 Municipal Elections: Town Council, Vienna
- 10-13 LWVFA Unit Virtual Meetings
- 12 LWVFA Legacy Committee, Virtual, 1 to 3 p.m.
- 15 McLean Community Center Election
- 17 Voter Registration Deadline for June 8th Democratic Primary
- 19 LWVFA Virtual Board Meeting, 10 a.m.
- 22-23 LWV-VA Virtual Convention
- 27 LWV-VA Virtual Board Meeting

Inside This Issue

Presidents' Message	2
Program Director's Notes	3
Call for Program Ideas	3
Volunteers Needed	3
Felons' Ability to Have Their Voting Rights Restored is Updated	4
Membership Report	4
Guidebook on CEDAW	EF-1
Discussion Questions	EF-6
Donors and Supporters	EF-6
zMod Update	5
Environmental Update	5
Domestic Violence: Why Does the Victim not Leave the Abuser?	8
May Unit Meetings	9



Presidents' Message



Greetings Fellow Leaguers,

This has been an eventful spring. From all the progressive legislation in Richmond to the not-so-wonderful restriction of voter access in Georgia, legislators have been busy. While we laud the former advances, the latter disenfranchisement fills us with trepidation and concern for what lies ahead. Indeed, numerous other States are now reexamining their voter laws seeking to make it harder for citizens to cast their ballots.

These recent events, coupled with the growing social awareness and activism, have brought the role of corporate responsibility within the community to the forefront. Within and without their businesses, entities are examining the importance of equity and inclusion. Owners, employees and customers are asking, should companies shoulder civic responsibility and demonstrate their commitment to racial and economic justice? Should their leadership speak out against the new voter suppression laws which seem to be unfairly biased against people of color and low economic means – the two populations most often targeted? What even does their brand or logo represent and what is the message or stereotype it may convey?

Many corporations including Microsoft, Google and Apple were quick to come out against the blatantly suppressive aspects of the new voting laws. A recent letter penned by the children of civil rights beacons Dr. M.L. King Jr, Congressman John Lewis, and Reverend C.T. Vivian urged the two largest Atlanta-based corporate giants, Delta and Coca Cola, to speak out against these laws. In response to this growing pressure, both CEOs issued strong statements against this legislation. It is unfortunate that this outreach may result in a backlash from the government, potentially negatively affecting shareholders, and thus incurring their wrath.

The question is therefore, do these corporations have the duty to take a stand on political matters? It seems like the answer is yes. According to Dr. Bernice King, daughter of Dr. M.L. King Jr, "Corporate leaders have the greatest influence in Washington and on our state legislators. They pay lobbyists and invest in campaigns. They need to use their leverage—their lobbying leverage—on Capitol Hill

and at the state level." (Forbes magazine)

The younger generation is even more invested in the moral fiber of the companies for which they work. More than half the people polled in the U.S. by the Boston Consulting Group said they would not apply for jobs in a company whose values and stance on diversity and inclusiveness did not match their beliefs. Therefore, it is in the long-term interests of these corporations that they take a stand even if it may seem reckless to go against the lawmakers at first. These kinds of racially unjust actions by state governments can also be damaging to the states economically. A historic example can be found in Birmingham. This city was set to be the economic engine for growth in the South. However, racial protests in the '50s and '60s weakened industry recruitment, according to Forbes magazine. The same could happen very easily to Atlanta, unless the main employers there align themselves more with younger Americans, who are more socially and racially conscious than ever before.

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

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2020 - 2021

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or call 703-658-9150.

A partnership between corporate America, nonprofit America, and all the other agencies fighting to preserve Democracy is critical. If all these economic and social forces take a stand and demand equity, inclusion and representation, we can look forward to the safeguarding of free and fair elections which are the hallmark of a true Democracy.

Speaking of fairness and equity, our League was well represented at the 65th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held this year, March 15 - 26. The themes of this year's CSW were "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, in order to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls." This powerful and important virtual event was well attended and worthwhile.

During this event, our very first female Vice President, Kamala Harris, delivered a statement. Indeed, it was a proud moment for us all when she stated, "...the status of women is the status of democracy"!

Let all of us, the women and men of the League, embody this declaration and continue our education and advocacy, ensuring the rights and liberties of our free and democratic society for this generation and those to come.

Anu and Nancy

Program Director Notes

By Jessica Storrs

The discussion on Broken US Treaties prompted many interesting conversations, with some members shocked by the sheer number of treaties the U.S. had withdrawn from or failed to ratify. There were many theories about the reasons for this, including the United States' desire to maintain independence and flexibility, our history of isolationism, and the difficulty in getting a two-thirds majority in the current Senate climate.

We will continue the conversation this month when the units review the draft CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Guidebook prepared by the Advocacy and Action Committee.

June is scheduled as a "Do Your Own Thing" month, with the option of using the upcoming showing of the documentary "Resilience" as your unit's program. Julie Jones

has arranged for an online showing of the documentary on Monday, June 7th @ 7:00pm and it will include a panel discussion by local leaders.

Call for Program Ideas 2021-22

What issues should the League focus on in the upcoming year? Each month the *VOTER* newsletter spotlights a particular program topic and we need your input!

Ideas are helpful but finding volunteers to author a report is the key ingredient! Recently, several units expressed an interest in learning more about Native American Voting Rights, but we need a member(s) to take the lead on this.

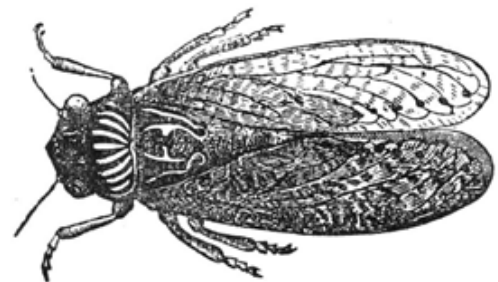
Please contact Jessica Storrs at jessica.storrs@lwv-fairfax.org if you would like to discuss an idea for publication in Fall 2021 or Spring 2022. We can't do it without you!

Volunteers Needed!

Reparations, a Program Topic for 2022

We are looking for members to participate in the study of reparations, which is a complex topic often discussed in the media, but not well defined or understood. The group that convenes on this topic would decide on the scope and dimensions of our local League's study. Nothing has been predetermined. The study is tentatively scheduled for publication in the *Voter* in Spring 2022.

Please contact Sidney Johnson if you are interested. sidneyjohnson3@verizon.net or 703-476-0581



Welcome Brood X!

Virginia Updates Restoration of Voting Rights for Felons

By Mary Jane Cleary

Member, LWV-VA Justice Caucus

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam issued an Order on March 16, 2021, that updated the ability of persons who have been convicted of felonies to have their voting rights restored.

Prior to the Governor's Order a person who has a felony record must have completed all of her/his sentence, including probation, before she/he was eligible to apply to have her/his civil rights, including the right to vote, restored. With this Order the person can apply to have her/his voting rights restored as soon as that person has completed her/his incarceration. The person no longer has to wait until after she/he completes active community supervision, if any.

The person can apply to the Governor's Office through either the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Website restore.virginia.gov or request that her/his file be reviewed in conjunction with the Department of Corrections to determine if she/he may be eligible to have their rights restored.

Once the person's rights have been restored that person is also eligible to serve on a jury, run for office, and become a notary public. However, that person is not eligible to carry a firearm.

Virginia is one of three states in the United States whose constitution permanently disenfranchises citizens with past felony convictions but gives the governor the sole discretion to restore civil rights, excluding firearm rights.

As of March 16th the Governor's Order has restored the voting rights of over 69,000 people, with a total of more than 110,000 felons having had their voting rights restored over his term of office to date.

In a related action the 2021 General Assembly passed two resolutions, one in the House and one in the Senate, that would start the referendum process to amend the Commonwealth's Constitution allowing felons the right to vote upon their release without any further action on their part. After the next general election the Legislature will need to agree upon one version of the same amendment and have it pass after which it must be sent to the voters for their approval. If approved, the Constitution will be amended. If it doesn't pass it will not be amended and the process would need to start over if people are willing.

LWFVA MEMBERSHIP REPORT FOR MAY 2021

By Carol Bursik

At the beginning of February, LWVFA had 452 members, but we have grown to 467 over a two-month period. We now have 345 primary members, 62 household members, 31 students, and 29 life members. Becky Thies became a 50-year member this year. Congratulations, Becky!

The following are our new and reinstated (r) members; students are indicated by an (s):

Christina Biebesheimer
Linda Bollon (r)
Janet Bradford (r)
Carrie Hane
Janet Martin
Gail McDonald (r)
Kari Mitchum
Jason Morgan and Household (r)

Jaya Nachnani (s)
Lisa Sales (r)
Karen Shaw and Household
Ella Stratman (s)
Sherri Thompson-Brusca
Paige Valentine (r)
Debbie van Opstal

GUIDEBOOK ON CEDAW

Contact Jill Follows at jill.follows@lwv-fairfax.org

This month Unit discussions focus on the Guidebook on CEDAW, the United Nations fundamental and universal human rights Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Guidebook is a collaborative work. The primary authors are the LWVFA and the Human Rights Special Interest Group. For additional information please email jill.follows@lwv-fairfax.org (Co-Chair Action and Advocacy).

The LWVFA will distribute the Guidebook to other Fairfax-based groups soon, along with an invitation to join us in persuading the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to pass a Resolution in support of CEDAW. The Resolution will call for, among other items, the collection of data on the status of women, gender-neutral policies in the County code, gender discrimination analysis of the budget, and a transparent process for reporting on the extent of violence against women and girls.

The full text of the Guidebook on CEDAW is available online at <http://bit.ly/CEDAWGB>. Due to space restrictions, an abbreviated version appears below in this *Fairfax VOTER*. The printed version below starts with an Overview of CEDAW, followed by a section called Frequently Asked Questions, and ends with the arguments by proponents and opponents to CEDAW's ratification. The online Guidebook has: an extensive timeline of the history of CEDAW, revealing America's outlier position; reprint of parts of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Majority Report, 2002; chart of the Articles in CEDAW; Virginia HR 277 Commemorating the 40th anniversary of CEDAW (2021); and photographs from the United Nations.

OVERVIEW: The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the worldwide norm promoting human rights for women. CEDAW embraces women's empowerment and creates a process for identifying, assessing and eliminating discriminatory actions that target and impact women and girls.

On February 3, 2021, the Virginia House of Delegates passed HR277 commemorating the 40th anniversary of CEDAW and charting Virginia's course to conduct a gender equity assessment on all State departments, boards, authorities and commissions, followed by the designation of a task force to support this action.

The contributors and supporters of this GUIDEBOOK on CEDAW look forward to the passing of a Resolution [in support of CEDAW in Fairfax County](#). When the resolution is passed, Fairfax County will join many other forward-thinking U.S. cities and counties. The resolution will call for, among other initiatives: better access to data on the status of women in Fairfax County; editing of local codes to foster gender neutral policies; and the promotion of gender equity in employment, economic development, and health care. In addition, it will call for the creation of a transparent process for the County's reporting on human rights violations against women and girls, especially reporting on violence against women and girls, and a gender analysis to monitor discrimination in the budget process.

An overwhelming number of industrialized nations and Third World countries have ratified CEDAW, agreeing to take all justifiable measures to end all forms of discrimination against women, improve the status of women, and enact *de jure* and *de facto* measures of equality between men and women. (*De jure* means entitled by right; *de facto* denotes a practice in fact, even if not recognized officially)

The United States is an outlier country. It has not ratified CEDAW and condemned discrimination against women along with most other nations. The U.S. forsakes CEDAW's fundamental and normative human rights framework supporting the equality of women and ending discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. In the U.S., factually inaccurate statements and partisan politics obfuscate the purpose of CEDAW and harm women's rights to live as free and equal human beings.

We proceed with optimism and reflect on the positive steps taken years ago when then-Sen. Joseph Biden (now President Biden) chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) and presided over a Senate Hearing on CEDAW. The majority report from the Senate Committee came down in favor of advising the President to consent to CEDAW.

With human rights principles guiding our way and perseverance at our core, the time has come to leverage the support of elected leadership in Fairfax County to endorse

the human rights norms embodied in CEDAW. We urge Fairfax County leadership to step up and pass a Resolution supporting the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls. This will be a stepping stone toward universal and fundamental acknowledgment of human rights for women and girls.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

(1) *How do you pronounce CEDAW?* (see daw) rhymes with seesaw

(2) *What does the acronym CEDAW stand for?* Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(3) *Is CEDAW a United Nations human rights convention?* Yes. CEDAW is one of the UN's nine "core" international human rights instruments. It is overseen by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

(4) *What is a convention and how is it different from a treaty?* A convention is a document that expands the body of international human rights law and that is written by an international body, such as the United Nations, and sets international norms. The convention, once ratified by a country, may be used by civil society organizations and politicians in that country to demand change. A convention, such as CEDAW, may affect multiple countries. A treaty is usually written between specific, sometimes only two, parties. For example, the parties at the end of a war may draft and sign a peace treaty. The terms *convention* and *treaty* are often used interchangeably. (For our purposes, the distinction between these terms is much ado about nothing.)

(5) *What are human rights?* "Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life, liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination." <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

(6) *Is CEDAW a global norm?* Yes. CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. It has already been ratified by nearly every one of the Member

States at the United Nations. CEDAW declares women's equality and stands for women's right to be free from discrimination and violence. CEDAW holds governments responsible for fulfilling their obligations under this convention. Many countries have cited CEDAW in their domestic laws, including the Australian Law Reform Commission that said "Equality in law, as required by CEDAW, needs to be understood in a different and more substantial sense than merely equality before the law. Any understanding of equality must take account of the social and historical disadvantages of women and how that affected the law." (Baldez, Lisa. *Defying Convention*, p. 128, citing Brynes, Andrew C., University of New South Wales Faculty Law Research Paper No. 2010-



Sculpture by Danish artist Starecke represents hope. The sculpture is in the Trusteeship Chamber, UN headquarters, NYC. Photo by © J. Follows

2017 at page 12)

(7) *How is CEDAW different from other international human rights instruments?* CEDAW obligates countries to take "all appropriate measures" to eliminate discrimination against women. By way of contrast, the Beijing Platform for Action outlines an agenda and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 urges countries to comply with CEDAW. (Baldez, p. 100)

(8) *Did the United States of America ratify CEDAW?* No. The U.S. Senate has held many hearings on CEDAW since 1988 but has never taken a vote that would provide advice and consent on this Convention to the President. Under the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. Senate must vote, by supermajority (67%) to adopt a United Nations convention. "In the United States, the process generally works like this: the president signs a treaty, signaling an intention to ratify. The president then transmits the treaty to the Senate for its advice and consent. Treaties begin their legislative journey in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, which holds a public hearing to discuss ratification and then votes on whether to send the treaty for a vote on a resolution of ratification on the Senate floor." (The Senate approves or rejects a resolution.) (Baldez, p. 25)

(9) *If ratified eventually by the U.S., will CEDAW radically change U.S. laws regarding discrimination against women?* No. CEDAW is a process. It is a blueprint for achieving women's full equality and freedom from discrimination and violence. CEDAW provides guidance and sets up mechanisms for signatory nations to follow the forward-facing movement toward human rights for women worldwide.

CEDAW cannot impose policies on countries or require countries to adopt specific policies.

“Ratification of CEDAW precipitates a dynamic process by which domestic political actors can work to bring about change. By ratifying CEDAW, countries take on a legal obligation to comply and make a public commitment to the standards articulated in the convention.” (Baldez, p. 131)
 “The vision of CEDAW as exerting a direct impact on policy outcomes has impeded the prospects for ratification in the United States.” (Baldez, p. 131)

(10) *The U.S. adopted other UN human rights treaties and called them “non-self-executing.” What does that mean?* In the U.S., international human rights treaties are treated as non-self-executing. In other words, the treaties, even after adoption, do not have legal weight in the U.S., unless and until the U.S. Congress passes legislation enacting specific articles in the human rights treaty.

(11) *How does CEDAW work?* CEDAW creates a process that encourages face-to-face dialogue between nations and the CEDAW Committee that, in turn, motivates country delegates to discuss the universal norms of women's human rights. This process acts to solidify international norms.

Each member country writes a periodic report and submits it to the CEDAW Committee. The Committee reviews the report and writes a list of questions for the government, which it must answer in writing. The CEDAW Committee holds a session (each session lasts 3 weeks; about 7-12 countries present reports) at the UN where the delegation from a government has a dialogue with the Committee about its compliance with CEDAW. The Committee meets with NGOs from the country and finally issues Concluding Observations (drafted by the rapporteur assigned to the country). The Concluding Observations discuss a country's progress on CEDAW implementation, concerns about limited progress, and recommended actions. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/sessions.htm>

Concluding Observations are not legally binding. Rather, they serve to focus the work of NGOs and encourage criti-

cal thinking and targeted questioning to legislators charged with ensuring the human rights of all people.

A periodic report is a government's report that shows what progress it has made to “giving effect” to CEDAW. (Article 18 CEDAW) Part One of the periodic report gives data and Part Two gives information on the *de jure* status of women in the country regarding Articles 1-16.

The CEDAW Committee can call on a government to appear over and over again and to submit reports (Article 18 (I) (b) in addition to the initial report and the periodic report).

(12) *What is the CEDAW Committee?* The CEDAW Committee is a group of independent experts, nominated by ratifying nations, who meet to discuss the interpretation of CEDAW and administer the treaty. The 23 independent experts are NOT official representatives from any government. CEDAW Committee sessions are open to the public. The Committee issues General Recommendations (GRs) occasionally. The GRs interpret the treaty. (Article 21 CEDAW) The GRs are general and advise all the member countries how they shall report on issues and comply and interpret CEDAW. The GRs are the view of the Committee but not a ruling or judgment. (Baldez, p. 112)

(13) *What are some examples of General Recommendations (GRs)?* GRs 14-18 identify issues that are deemed discriminatory such as female circumcision, AIDS, employment in the informal sector, unpaid household labor, and disability. GR 19 talks about violence against women (the text of CEDAW does not mention it) and affirms that the definition of discrimination found in CEDAW applies to both public and private action. GR 21 covers equality in marriage and family relations; says that polygamous marriages contravene equality between men and women. GR 23 outlines the obstacles faced by women who participate in public life, such as the “gap between *de jure* and *de facto* status of women that surrounds issues, such as stereotypes, paid and unpaid labor, less access to political information, and the design of the electoral systems.” (Baldez, p. 113). GR 24 discusses women's health; calls for judicial action to ensure compliance with CEDAW and to make sure there is no impunity for those practicing harmful traditional practices (Baldez, p. 115) such as female genital mutilation, polygamy, and marital rape that may expose women and girls to HIV/AIDS. GR 24 mentions abortion in this way: “When possible, legislation criminalizing abortion could be amended to remove punitive provisions imposed on women who undergo abortion.” (This language appears in a GR but nowhere in the general text of CEDAW.) The GR does not advocate for abortion or define abortion as a

basic human right. GR 25 spells out the Committee's vision for CEDAW: the member states shall eliminate public and private discrimination; signatory countries must ensure *de facto* women's equality, not merely *de jure* equality; and institutional norms must be changed on gender stereotypes. (Baldez, p. 117)

(14) *Do Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have a role in the development of policies and practices?* YES. NGOs provide the CEDAW Committee with "shadow reports." These reports give factual local information about the status of women. NGOs may comment on the official government reporting from their home country. Their report may be either in person at a hearing or in writing to the CEDAW Committee. NGO's may suggest questions to be asked of their home country's delegation to the CEDAW Committee. NGOs may also serve as consultants to the Rapporteur during the writing of the Concluding Observations.

PROPONENTS OF CEDAW SAY.....

CEDAW is a process, not an edict.

CEDAW is a process for raising awareness of the status of women and the discriminatory practices impacting women worldwide.

CEDAW calls on the ratifying country and local government bodies to regulate their own behaviors, in accordance with the fundamental guiding human rights norms spelled out in the text of the treaty and by the General Recommendations from the CEDAW Committee.

"The advancement of women promotes stability and economic growth for societies as a whole." (Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2002)

CEDAW may provide women with the most comprehensive protection from domestic violence. (Baldez, p. 31)

The CEDAW Committee "...provides international accountability for women's rights policy and reshapes the contours of the policy-making process by bringing the CEDAW Committee into the domestic policy arena." (Baldez, p. 22)

CEDAW will enhance America's position as a global leader for women's human rights.

Ratification of CEDAW will "...reaffirm the commitment of the United States before the eyes of the world to the principle of equality between men and women and to the

promotion and protection of women's rights at home and abroad." (Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2002)

CEDAW norms will enhance America's position as a global leader on women's equality and protection against discrimination.

"US ratification will give our diplomats a tool--a means to press other governments to fulfill their obligations under the Convention." (Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2002)

"(US) ratification will further empower women in foreign nations who seek to use CEDAW to press for women's rights in their respective countries." (Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2002)

CEDAW leaves the U.S. Constitution and existing federal legislation intact, including:

U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment Equal Protection Clause: Under this standard, sex-based classifications are permissible only if they have an "exceedingly persuasive justification."

Federal Statutes such as the 1963 Equal Pay Act, 1964 Title VII and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act, 1972 Title IX of the Education Amendments, Fair Housing Act, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act, Violence Against Women Acts of 1994, 2000, and 2005; Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act are not affected. (Testimony of DOJ Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General – Civil Rights Division) <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/10-11-18%20Bagenstos%20Testimony.pdf>

The CEDAW Committee has limited power over governments that ratify the treaty. The Committee cannot impose its agenda on any nation.

CEDAW will be complementary to the Equal Rights Amendment.

If and when the ERA becomes part of the U.S. Constitution, it will provide a legal tool for women to pursue their rights against government actors in a court of law. A body of law will be built upon the trials and tribulations of women seeking remedies for the injustices done to them on account of their sex.

CEDAW promises more. Article 2(e) calls for signatory nations to ensure through domestic laws the elimination of

discrimination against women by “any person, organization or enterprise.” Under the U.S. Constitution, certain discriminatory government actions are proscribed, but the same actions by private parties or private organizations are not.

CEDAW creates a process that encourages face-to-face dialogue between the CEDAW Committee and member states at the United Nations. Country delegates participate in discussions about the universal norms pertaining to women’s human rights. “By ratifying CEDAW, countries take on a legal obligation to comply and make a public commitment to the standards articulated in the convention.” (Baldez, p. 131)

Ratifying CEDAW is the morally correct thing to do.

Human rights, including human rights for women, are fundamental universal rights. Contrary arguments derive from patriarchal, misogynistic and otherwise unjust political belief systems about the human condition.

(The text of CEDAW runs contrary to this argument. In fact, CEDAW has neutral language on the topic of a woman’s right to an abortion.) The text of CEDAW, Article 12 (1) reads: States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

OPPONENTS OF CEDAW SAY.....

CEDAW will intrude on Americans’ personal choices, open the flood gates to litigation and violate the country’s sovereignty.

CEDAW will lead to the decriminalization of prostitution, criticize religion, allow textbooks to highlight non-stereotypical gender roles, put babies into government-sponsored day care. (Baldez, p.5)

The CEDAW Committee and its so-called “gender experts” will watch over the U.S. (Baldez, p.4)

CEDAW will stop Mother’s Day celebrations because that day encourages traditional women’s roles. CEDAW is a “hidden weapon” wielded by “radical feminists” (Baldez, p.5)

CEDAW’s reach will be far and wide with tentacles that can impose policy on unwitting citizens

“The CEDAW Committee has for 30 years established a consistent record of promoting gender-related policies that do not comport with existing American legal and cultural norms and has encouraged the national governments of CEDAW members to engage in social engineering on a massive scale.” (U.S. Senate 2010 CEDAW hearing with Heritage Foundation speaker Steven Groves) (Baldez, p. 9)

“The United States has the strongest record on opportunities and rights for women in the world, and that ratification of the convention, rather than improving that record, would raise divisive social issues.” Moreover, the 1994 minority felt that the convention’s definition of “discrimination against women” is so broad that it would apply to private organizations and areas of personal conduct not covered by US law. (Minority report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2002)

Secretary of State Edmund Muskie (Carter administration) acknowledged the minority’s point and argued for adding a reservation to the US ratification of CEDAW. The “broad definition against women that applied throughout the (CEDAW) convention has the effect of applying the convention to private organizations and areas of personal conduct not covered by US law.”

“The convention has also generated vigorous debate about the implications of US compliance with regard to important social issues such as abortion on demand (including restrictions on Federal funding), comparable worth salary laws, women in the military, same-sex marriage, health care, single-sex education and potential government intrusion into areas traditionally within the scope of family privacy. That debate perforce must continue, given that these issues have not, unfortunately, been laid to rest by Committee action on the convention.” (Minority Report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2002)

REFERENCES are cited in the online version of the *GUIDE-BOOK on CEDAW*. The arguments for and against ratification of CEDAW are more fully developed in the text by Baldez.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What fundamental principles support a Fairfax County Resolution in support of CEDAW?
2. What hurdles must be overcome to pass a County Resolution in support of CEDAW?
3. Which Fairfax organizations do you suggest we contact in our campaign to educate and include in our initiative to pass a Resolution?
4. Do you have a special interest in working on international relations? Please email jill.follows@lww-fairfax.org directly.

LWVFA Donors and Supporters

By Lynn Stewart, Treasurer

The LWVFA Board extends an overwhelming thank you
to the following individuals and organizations
for their amazing support!
February 1 – March 31, 2021

Janet Bradford
Marion Brown
Jane Byers
Susan Cash
Mary Jane Cleary
Susan Cowart
Beverly Dahlin
Lee Ellis
Judith Helein
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Sarah Mayhew
Network for Good
Susan O'Neill
Mary O'Sullivan

Lois Page
Ronna Pazdral
Jill Altmann & Daniel Meyer
Patricia Renzetti
Nancy Roodberg
Julia Sayles
Judith Smith
Lynn Stewart
Allison Stover
Anna Stuart-Swann
Anne Thomas
Arina van Breda
Gail van Buren
Vivian Watts

* * * * *

Members of:
Oakton-Vienna Unit

Thank You!!!

zMOD Update: Zoning in Fairfax County

By Julie Jones

On March 23, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted a new and modernized Zoning Ordinance which will be effective on July 1, 2021. The new Zoning Ordinance is reorganized with a more intuitive format, adds new graphics, and a text that has been edited for readability. Revisions have been made to remove inconsistencies, gaps, and ambiguities that had found their way into the Ordinance over the previous 42 years. Importantly, the land uses have been modernized using a classification and category structure with new and consolidated uses and associated use regulations and updated definitions where needed.

The new Zoning Ordinance updates certain regulations related to residential uses, including accessory structures, accessory living units, home-based businesses, and flags. Notable changes include:

- Allowing accessory structures, such as sheds, children's play equipment, and gazebos, up to 12 feet in height to be located five feet from the side and rear lot lines;
- Removing the age and disability requirements for accessory living units (previously known as accessory dwelling units) and changing the process from requiring special permit approval to an administrative permit;
- Modernizing the home-based business use and permitting customers with special permit approval; and
- Adding a maximum flagpole height of 25 feet for lots with single-family dwellings or manufactured homes and 60 feet for lots with all other uses, with the ability to request a special permit for an increased height. No limit on the size of flags was added.

Over the next several months a new website with enhanced search and navigation functions will be developed to host the new Ordinance, forms and other materials will be updated, and additional educational materials and outreach events will be added to the zMOD webpage. Please check the website for updates and sign up for the zMOD listserv to stay engaged and receive updates. Contact the Department of Planning and Development's Zoning Administration Division at 703-324-1314, TTY 711, or by email with questions.

Environmental Update: Climate Change on Your Doorstep

By Elizabeth Lonoff

Climate change is not an abstract concept to happen someday, somewhere else. At-risk species of coffee trees are now in decline in the rainforest. Sea level rise is causing routine flooding in Norfolk streets on sunny days, and the resulting saltwater intrusion is killing forests on the Eastern Shore. Seventy-four percent of the 738 economists responding to a new global survey by New York University School of Law's Institute for Policy Integrity favor taking "immediate and drastic action" to address climate change,



Nowhere to go - polar bears are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act due to this habitat loss. Photo: University of California, Riverside.

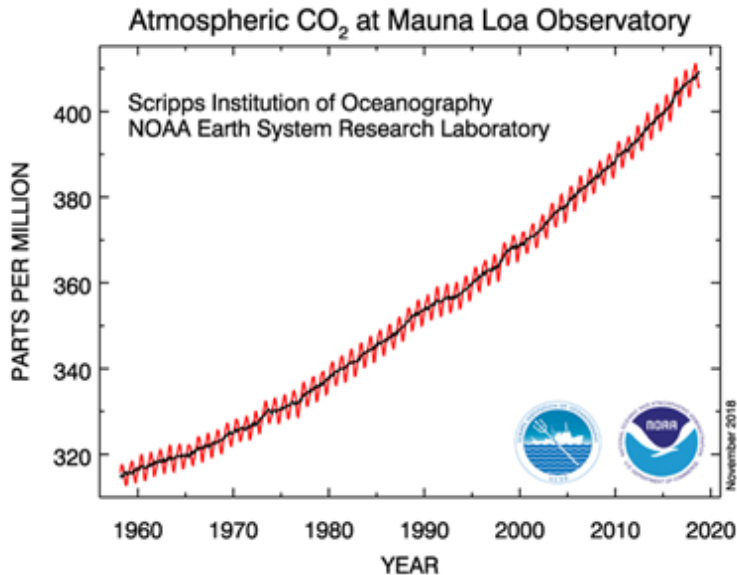
recognizing that the more we do now, the less painful climate adaptation will be. Two-thirds agreed the benefits of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 were likely to outweigh the costs.

Dr. Sally Valdes, a retired U.S. Department of the Interior bi-

ologist, recently made a presentation outlining ways that climate change is impacting ecosystems. With carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at levels unprecedented in the last 800,000 years, wildlife species have changed their geographic ranges, abundance, and species interactions in response to changing temperatures, precipitation, and/or pH. For example:

- With sea-level rise of 6.5' possible, areas set aside for wildlife, such as seabird nesting sites along the coast and on low-elevation islands, may be lost. Sea turtles may return to locations that have lost their beaches. Human developments limit ability of habitats and wildlife to move inland with the changing shoreline. Humans and wildlife will compete for less habitable space.
- Terrestrial wildlife must move north or uphill, when possible, and marine wildlife must move north or into deeper water to escape warmer temperatures. Fragmented habitats and the rate of change can make

it difficult for species to find new, suitable habitats. Species with limited ranges, found at high elevations, or with limited genetic diversity are particularly at risk. For coastal wetland species, flooded habitat can be lost if coastal wetlands are blocked by structures and cannot move inland.



As described at carvonvisuals.com, on May 9, 2013, the daily average concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached 400 parts per million, a level not experienced in more than one million years. Before industrialization, the concentration was 280 parts per million. Human activity has added much more than the difference, but so far, much has been absorbed by the oceans and by plants.

- Disconnects can result in mismatches in timing for breeding, pest avoidance, and food availability. With changing temperatures and habitats, a traditional food source may not be available when wildlife need certain foods. Migrating birds, for example, time their journeys and arrivals based on food historically available at particular places. Warming oceans can cause some food sources to move, like the herring on which Atlantic puffins rely to feed their young because they are the right size for their nestlings to swallow. Additionally, acidification of oceans can make it harder for species like corals, lobsters, and clams to form shells.
- Heat stress can adversely affect mammalian reproduction. In some fish, reptiles, and amphibians, consistently higher temperatures can cause an imbalance in sex ratios because the temperature during development determines the sex of offspring. Sustained high temperatures can kill fish due to the direct effects of temperature and warmer waters holding less oxygen.

- On land, more frequent and stronger storms can cause long-term damage to habitats and disrupt bird migration. Storms also can rapidly lower the salinity of coastal ecosystems, which can stress or kill species used to saltier conditions. Sediments and other forms of pollution washed into aquatic systems by major storm events also stress freshwater and estuarine systems.
- Climate change means more frequent and larger fires. The effects on rare species could be devastating. The World Wildlife Fund estimated that nearly three billion animals were killed or displaced in the record Australian wildfire season in 2019/2020.
- Climate change is projected to increase summertime average ground-level ozone concentrations in many parts of the U.S. Ozone damages plant life providing food and shelter for wildlife. It significantly reduces the growth of sensitive tree species like black cherry, white pine, and tulip poplar. Ozone also harms animal life, likely similar to the effects on human health – inflaming airways and making lungs more susceptible to infection.
- With outbreaks in Maine and New Hampshire in the last few years, increased tick populations in moose can kill calves. Also, the incidence of vector-transmitted diseases like Lyme disease probably will increase in the U.S. as their hosts move north.

Wildlife has some capacity to adapt. Some birds have shifted nesting times, which may allow them to stay in the same area but nest at a similar temperature. Atlantic fish populations generally have moved northward and into deeper waters. However, the rate of change in climatic conditions can be too fast for some wildlife species to adapt. Species will continue to need to adapt until a “new normal” is reached.

We can help wildlife adapt by preserving and restoring existing wetlands and grasslands, providing wildlife corridors to allow northward migration, and protecting areas upland from coasts to provide places where new natural coasts can form. Also, Dr. Valdez suggests you help wildlife by planting more trees and vegetation, avoiding the use of chemicals that contaminate food chains and environments, and monitoring wildlife through citizen science programs. Beyond that, you can contribute less to climate change by using less energy, from transportation choices

to recycling to wasting less food/buying food more locally.

Local Opportunities

City Nature Challenge: Enjoy uploading photos to iNaturalist to help document life on Earth. From April 30th-May 3rd, the DC area will join 200 other urban areas worldwide in a friendly competition to observe the most wild species of plants and animals. Learn more at <https://citynaturechallengedc.org/>.

Plant NOVA Natives: You can submit photos and questions when you register for a May 5th expert talk on Pruning Native Shrubs and Trees at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfr_nCAVmTuKCUUnDrP4PY7Ry-4dMITbH_Be1on5-00p0J_CF-Q/viewform. See <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/local-native-plant-sales> for spring native plant sales.

Water supply grants: Fairfax Water is supporting citizen source water protection efforts and community activities related to water supply within Fairfax Water's Source Waters or service area. Submit applications by May 17th. For more info., see <https://www.fairfaxwater.org/grants>.

Potomac River talk: At 7 pm on May 26th, the Potomac Conservancy's president will present history and challenges like stormwater runoff and climate change. Register for this free virtual Friends of Dyke Marsh event at <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEucOuvrTwoGN3SQH2u-n5LbuUn8dcfeaqK>.

Grants for community associations: Audubon at Home is offering six one-to-one matching grants of \$2,350 each for community associations to re-landscape their entrances using native plants. Applications are due May 31st. See details at <https://www.audubonva.org/neighborhood-entrances-grant>.

Climate action: Fairfax County is developing its first-ever Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), which will address energy, transportation, development, and waste issues. The CECAP will outline GHG reduction goals for the community and will include recommended strategies and actions community members can take on a voluntary basis to help achieve the goals. This month you can participate at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/public-engagement-ccap>.

Award nominations: Fairfax County Environmental Excellence Awards nominations will be accepted through June 1st. See <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-en>

[ergy-coordination/environmental-excellence-awards](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/environmental-excellence-awards).

Composting pilot program: Fairfax County's two main recycling facilities now accept food waste. You can deposit food scraps in the green bins as explained at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/food-scraps-composting-drop>. Compost is made at a local facility and used for landscaping and agriculture. Before the end of last winter, 4,500 pounds of food waste had been

Covid-19 Impacts on Women

According to the UN, "(A)cross every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated worldwide for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex:

> Compounded economic impacts are felt especially by women and girls who are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty.

> While early reports reveal more men are dying as a result of COVID-19, the health of women generally is adversely impacted through the reallocation of resources and priorities, including sexual and reproductive health services.

> Unpaid care work has increased, with children out-of-school, heightened care needs of older persons and overwhelmed health services.

> As the COVID-19 pandemic deepens economic and social stress coupled with restricted movement and social isolation measures, gender-based violence is increasing exponentially. Many women are being forced to 'lockdown' at home with their abusers at the same time that services to support survivors are being disrupted or made inaccessible.

All of these impacts are further amplified in contexts of fragility, conflict, and emergencies where social cohesion is already undermined and institutional capacity and services are limited."

Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406>

Domestic Violence: Why Does the Victim Not Leave the Abuser?

By Adarsh Trehan

Member, Domestic Violence Committee

“Why does the victim not leave her abuser?” The word “her” is used here, and in the following discussion, because approximately 90 percent of the domestic abuse victims are women. However, what is described below also applies to other victims who may be male or have other gender identities.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, “... leaving an abuser is the most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence. One study found from interviews with men who have killed their wives that either threats of separation by their partner or actual separations were most often the precipitating events that lead to the murder.” Even in cases where a murder does not take place, the abuser may inflict extremely serious injuries to the victim that require her hospitalization.

While the question of leaving is valid, there is a more important concern. “We need to stop blaming survivors for staying and start supporting them to enable them to leave. By understanding the many barriers that stand in the way of a woman leaving an abusive relationship – be it psychological, emotional, financial or physical threats – we can begin to support and empower women to make the best decision for them while holding abusers solely accountable for their behaviour.” (www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/women-leave/#151067690891-b8a32b5-f9977).

We need to understand that the victim has suffered and may still be suffering abuse and its physical and emotional effects. Of course, if leaving is an achievable and feasible option, it would be the best move. However, often she has been threatened with physical harm to her, her children, her relatives, or her pets. In addition, she may have been threatened with emotional harm and financial deprivation. She probably has been isolated from her family and friends for some length of time. She has been told by her abuser that only he can and will take care of her, because nobody else loves and cares for her as much as he does. She may also fear being shamed, embarrassed, and/or ostracized by others. This is especially true of minority victims and victims of color, where saving face is a serious matter.

The website Stand! For Families Free of Violence, cites a much more comprehensive list of barriers to leaving an

abusive relationship, including some mentioned earlier:

- **“Economic dependence:** Abusers often restrict their victim’s financial resources to keep them dependent.
- **Parenting:** Our culture puts a great deal of emphasis on the need for two parents, regardless of, whether or not, one parent is abusive.
- **Religious and family pressure** to keep the family together.
- **Security:** fear of being alone and that the responsibility of handling children and home will be overwhelming.
- **Loyalty:** Victims often believe that their abusers are sick, and that they should stay with them like they would if their partner had cancer or another disabling condition.
- **Pity:** Victims often believe that their abusers are worse off than they are themselves.
- **“Savior Complex”:** Many people believe that their love can change a partner for the better.
- **Fear** of the abuser’s suicide: Abusers often threaten to harm themselves if their victims leave.
- **Denial:** ‘It’s really not so bad.’
- **Love:** ‘I love him. When he’s not being abusive, he is quite loving and loveable.’
- **Guilt:** Abusers may convince their victims that marital problems are the victim’s fault.
- **Responsibility:** Victims may feel obligated to try to make the relationship work in order to fulfill marriage vows or other promises made to themselves, their children or their abuser.
- **Shame, embarrassment, humiliation:** ‘I don’t want anyone to know.’
- **Identity:** Many people feel they need a partner to feel complete.
- **Optimism:** ‘Things will get better.’
- **Low self-esteem:** ‘It must be my fault.’ ‘I deserve it.’ ‘I’ll never find anyone better.’ ‘A little love is better than no love at all.’
- **Survival:** Abusers often threaten to follow victims and hurt them or their children if they leave.
- **Learned Helplessness:** The feelings of passivity and paralysis which begin when a person is battered are reinforced by the responses of family, friends and helping professionals, who ignore the problem, don’t believe it really happened, and/or blame the victim.
- **“Stockholm Syndrome”:** When hostages are held for a period by their captors, they begin to identify with the captor. This syndrome is manifested by many victims who are literally held hostage by their abusers.
- When a person lives in unending terror/stress, their ability to resist gets worn away. They become confused, exhausted and lack the energy needed to make changes.”

Unit Discussion Meeting Locations

Topic: CEDAW

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 April 1, 2021, the following information was correct. Please use phone numbers to verify sites and advise of your intent to attend. May Unit Meetings will be virtual. The unit leaders will send the login information to every unit member.

Saturday, May 1, 2021

10 a.m. At-Large Unit and Briefing

Contact: Jessica, 301-704-7854 or jessica.storrs@lwv-fairfax.org

Monday, May 10

1:30 p.m. Greenspring (GSP)

Contact:
Pat, pmcgrady308@gmail.com;
Judy, jjsmith64@earthlink.net,
703-342-3353

Wednesday, May 12

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

Contact: Susan, 703-893-2229,
sfcowart@aol.com
or Peggy, 703-772-4939,
peggyknight49@gmail.com

10 a.m. Mount Vernon Day (MVD)

Contact: Diana, 703-704-5325 or
Jfdw1111@gmail.com

10 a.m. Fairfax Station (FXS)

Contact: Bev, 703-451-4438,
rbdahlin@verizon.net
or Sue, 703-266-0272,
sueoneill1@hotmail.com

Thursday, May 13

9 a.m. Reston Day (RD)

Contact: Barbara (703) 437-0795,
bseandlte@earthlink.net

9:30 a.m. Springfield (SPF)

Contact: Pat, 703-941-9210, Pat.
Fege@lwv-fairfax.org

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

Contact: Susan, 703-391-0666,
sadill@cox.net

1 p.m. Oakton/Vienna (OV)

Contact: Mary, 703-932-3665,
mmvalder@aol.com

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

Contact: Wendy, 703-319-4114,
wendy.foxgrage@gmail.com

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

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

June Meetings:

“Do Your Own Thing”



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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**The LWVFA Fairfax VOTER®
 May, 2021**

Anu Sahai, Co-President
 Nancy Roodberg, Co-President
 Katherine Ingmanson, 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.

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<https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/donate>



LWVFA MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

Dues year is July 1 – June 30

Membership Dues: Individual \$75 _____ Household \$100 (2 persons; 1 Voter) _____ Student (No fee) _____
 (A subsidy fund is available; check here _____ and include whatever amount you can afford.)

Membership Status: New _____ Renewal _____ Reinstatement _____ Donation _____
 (Dues are not tax deductible.)

Tax deductible donations must be written as a separate check or PayPal Payment to “LWVFA Ed Fund.”
 (Please print clearly)

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Address _____

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Please make checks payable to LWVFA. Mail to LWVFA, 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403
 OR Join online at <https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/join>

I am interested in becoming involved in (please indicate by checking the appropriate box(es)):

- Providing organization support (graphic 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, etc., 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, or Fairfax County Public Schools).

Other _____