



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

BULLETIN

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P.O. Box 10133, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0133
<http://www.lwvmcva.org>

Put This Poster Up

Be Sure All Eligible Voters Can Vote

The General Assembly voted to require that every Virginia voter present a Photo ID in order to vote in the November 4, 2014 election. This summer, the Department of Elections, formerly the State Board of Elections, voted that dated Photo IDs (DMV IDs and Passports) could be used up to one year after the expiration date. Six organizations, including the League of Women Voters of Virginia, sponsored the printing of fliers like the one folded into this newsletter and informational cards. We are posting these fliers and cards in public locations in the area

The fliers and cards list acceptable Photo IDs and tell voters without a Photo ID that they can get a Virginia Photo ID free at the offices of every Registrar of Elections until, and including,

Election Day. In Montgomery County, Registrar E. Randell Wertz's office is in the County Government Center, 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg.

According to the Department of Elections, there are 85,000 active voters who do not have a DMV Photo ID. These 85,000 voters will be mailed a notification that they are now required to have a Photo ID to vote.

Please help us educate voters about this requirement by passing the flier on to someone who doesn't have a Photo ID or by posting the flier on a bulletin board. If you would like more copies of the flier or copies of the cards, contact Mary Houska, Voter Service Chair, at mfdh@aol.com, 540-552-2717.

Why Partisan Redistricting Is Problem for Democratic Process

The League of Women Voters advocates a fair election process. It is essential to the health of our democracy. Partisan redistricting manipulates not only

Mary Houska, co-president

election results, but also it manipulates what happens to legislation in both the Congress and in the state legislatures.

When we think about

Gerrymandering, we think about districts that tend to be long and mostly skinny, drawn to pick up as many similar

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League Working with Local Non-partisan Redistricting Efforts

Retired members of the House of Delegates, Dave Nutter (R) and Jim Shuler (D) were speakers at a program on Gerrymandering, co-sponsored by One Virginia 2021 and the Montgomery County League, July 17, at the Montgomery Floyd Regional Library in Christiansburg. The program was organized by Terry Ellen Carter for One Virginia 2021. Pamela Hale, the Christiansburg Library Branch Manager, helped her. Both retired Delegates spoke about the intense pressure on moderate Delegates not to compromise.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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.

From Co-President Mary Houska

Organizing To Amend Our Constitution

Five years ago it became clear that even getting non-partisan redistricting legislation to the floor of the House of Delegates would require a massive push from the voters. This required organization. In 2009-2010, the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, led by former Executive Director, Doug Smith, formed a coalition of major Virginia organizations and leaders, including the Virginia LWV, and we pushed. By then, it was too late to pass an amendment to the Virginia Constitution so the coalition advocated legislation. The Virginia Senate passed its legislation almost unanimously, but the House of Delegates legislation never got past the House Privileges and Elections Committee.

To amend the Virginia Constitution the Constitution requires that the General Assembly pass the legislation, then the legislation is held over to be passed by a second session of the General Assembly and then, the amendment must pass a state referendum. This is a long process. However, it is the only route to take to ensure a long-run change to nonpartisan redistricting.

Legislation to bring about nonpartisan redistricting must define what characteristics of a district yield a nonpartisan district and it must state who will be responsible for determining the nonpartisan districts. Neither of these decisions is easy, nor will the most expert and thoughtful definition of districts necessarily yield ideal results. The Virginia Constitution already states (Article II, Section 6), "Every district shall be composed of contiguous and compact territory and shall be so constituted as to give, as nearly as is practicable, representation in proportion to the population of the district." What other characteristics should a district have?

The Virginia League's 2006 study on Virginia Redistricting asked local

Leagues to come to consensus on additional variables to define districts and on who should be responsible for drawing the districts. Our League added to the Virginia Constitution's present definition of contiguous, compact and representative of the population, the following: natural geographic boundaries, jurisdictional boundaries, communities of interest, and competitiveness. As you can guess, the 17 members of our League who voted really could not come to consensus to define the best way to draw districts. There was agreement among all Virginia Leagues that redistricting should be done by a bipartisan Commission composed of an odd number of individuals who are not elected officials, but are geographically distributed and demographically diverse.

A group calling itself One Virginia 2021: Virginians for Fair Redistricting, founded by Leigh Middleditch of Charlottesville, with former delegate Shannon Valentine from Lynchburg and businessman Jim Ukrop of Richmond was launched this February. A Charlottesville lawyer, Matt Scoble, is Executive Director. Former Montgomery County Delegate, Dave Nutter, is Board Secretary. The Advisory Board includes former Lt. Governor Bill Bolling and Jim Ukrop. Bob Gibson, Executive Director of the Sorensen Institute at the University of Virginia, Anne Sterling, President of the Virginia LWV, and Kerin Yates, President of the Charlottesville Area LWV are all on the organization's Policy Council. An article on Redistricting in the Municipal League's magazine, *Virginia Town and City*, by Gibson and Scoble, is on our web page. One Virginia 2021 jointly sponsored with our League the July 17 event in which former Delegates Dave Nutter and Jim Shuler spoke, discussing the problems of trying to pass good legislation in Virginia with its Gerrymandered and partisan districts. One Virginia 2021's web site is

<http://onevirginia2021.org/>.

This summer, a second Virginia organization, Fix the Districts, formed to press for a nonpartisan redistricting Constitutional Amendment. Its founders are Terry Ellen Carter of Christiansburg and Jasper Hendricks, a political activist from Farmville. Its web site is www.fixthedistricts.org.

Both organizations want to stimulate a ground-swell of voter interest in moving Virginia to nonpartisan redistricting by educating and getting commitments from many organizations, local and statewide, and from local governments. Montgomery County citizens can play a special role in this movement because two of its representatives in the House of Delegates are on the Privileges and Elections Committee. They are Nick Rush (R), 7th House District, and Joseph Yost (R), 12th House District. Writing letters to your House member telling him why you want him to support nonpartisan redistricting can be very important.

Action Bobbie Littlefield

Role of Studies Positions

Our LWV MC has plans to maintain its reputation as an active group of women and men looking forward to removing any roadblocks that may inhibit some eligible citizens from exercising their right to vote for whom they prefer.

LWVUS has about 20-25 lobbyists actively monitoring the progress of bills or issues we care about? We are asked to *make our numbers known*, by letting our legislators know about our individual perspectives. At our Annual Meeting our guest speaker, retired Del. Jim Shuler, urged us to remember that *numbers* of contacts - phone calls, e-mails, letters - do make a difference to a legislator.

It is possible that our LWVMC Action Team could send our members an emailed Action Alert containing talking points that may be helpful if you would like to participate in our League's advocacy efforts. Since The League is non-partisan, and is not asking for money, we hope our action alerts will feel a bit different from the deluge of emails and requests for money that we receive.

Thank you for contributions

Darlene Allen	Mary Ann H. Johnson	Millie Wiggert
Phyllis Albritton	Joseph Merola and Catherine duBreuil	Bill Baker
Susan Anderson	Beth Obenshain	John Muffo
Bev Fleming	Mary Ollendick	Janice Litschert
John and Sharon Hillison	Carolyn and David Rude	DeVaun Oberlender
Mary Houska	Judy Snoko	Don and June Mullins

Partisan Redistricting Problem Study of County Responsibilities, Costs Started

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voters as it can. When you crowd all the Republicans or all the Democrats from a broad region into one district, then politicians of the “other” party in all surrounding districts can comfortably win elections with a margin of maybe 55 percent. So, in a region which might have, roughly, equal party affiliation, the party that did the redistricting has insured it will continue to have a majority in the state legislature.

In this scenario both the politicians in the Gerrymandered districts and the politicians in the surrounding districts will win. They are likely not to have opposition in November. They all have “safe” districts. There are 100 seats in the Virginia House of Delegates. In the 2013 election 56 candidates faced no competition and only 19 of the remaining 44 district elections were really considered to be competitive. (These election statistics are from Bob Gibson and Matt Scoble, “Redistricting: In Search of a Better Solution.” Virginia Town and City, the Magazine of the Virginia Municipal League, Vol. 49, No. 5, June 2014. This article has been posted on www.LWVMCVA.org)

With no opposition, the winner is determined in each party’s district primary. Unfortunately, the people most likely to vote in a primary are each party’s most devoted members who tend to represent the extreme views of their party. Therefore, to hold a seat in the General Assembly or as a Virginia member of Congress, an incumbent must advocate the policies favored by the relatively small number of party activists who vote in the primaries. Moderates usually lose in these primaries.

While the population of northern Virginia is growing dramatically, the population of southwestern Virginia is not. Therefore, we are losing representation in the General Assembly and in the Congress. The 39th Virginia Senate District was moved from southwestern Virginia to northern Virginia in the 2001 redistricting. Senator Madison Marye from Shawsville had held that seat.

We are losing districts and the remaining districts are getting larger so we have fewer elected representatives. This makes it easier for those determining the redistricting to have some fun. Putting two leaders of the opposing party into the same district is a favorite outcome of redistricting.

In the 2001 redistricting, both Del. Jim Shuler and Del. Creigh Deeds lived in the new 12th district. That new 12th district covered from Bath to Giles counties, picking up western Montgomery County. Del Shuler stepped aside for Deeds to run. However, in October, Senator Emily Curic died. Deeds won the 12th House District, and then ran for and won Curic’s Senate district. Shuler then ran for the 12th House District and represented it until his retirement in 2011. During that decade Del. Shuler was the leading sponsor of legislation in the House of Delegates to bring about non-partisan redistricting.

Certainly, there are other reasons, besides partisan redistricting, why the General Assembly and the Congress can’t seem to compromise any more, but moving towards removing politics from the redistricting process would be a strong positive step towards more representative government.

The Montgomery County League is forming a working group to gather information on the government responsibilities and costs of Montgomery County and the Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg. Phyllis Albritton will chair the working group. Members interested in the topics are urged to join the study group.

The topics to be explored are:

1. Under the Virginia code, what are the government responsibilities of Counties and Towns? What are the expenditures of Montgomery County and the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg to carry out these responsibilities?
2. How are the County and the Towns now raising revenue to fund these responsibilities?
3. Under Virginia code, what are the revenue sources allowed for Towns, Cities and Counties? How can the County and its Towns best raise revenue to fund these responsibilities?
4. How would a change to city status of one or both towns change the revenue and obligations of the three governments?
5. Would the benefits of consolidation of all three governments into one government be worth the various costs of doing it?
6. Is there another solution (e.g. changes in state code) to the budget problems of Montgomery County and counties in Virginia with similar problems?

This working group will probably become an official League study at the Annual Meeting in May, 2015. The study would take time, but it should be well worth doing, as funding for local services is becoming more and more of a challenge.

To join the working group, contact Phyllis at Phyllis.T.Albritton@gmail.com or at her telephone numbers Home: 540/552-4848; Cell: 540/392-6648.

Blacksburg Town Council Passes Resolution Supporting Nonpartisan Redistricting; Efforts of One Virginia 2021

In his talk at our Annual Meeting on May 15, former Del. Jim Shuler emphasized the importance of a broad base of support for non-partisan redistricting, especially from Virginia local governments, in order to get the General Assembly to pass legislation.

One Virginia 2021 has drawn up recommended resolutions for local governments. Blacksburg Town Council passed this resolution at its August 26 meeting. Williamsburg City Council also has passed the resolution.

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Calendar

October 7 11:45 a.m.	First Tuesday Lunch, 622 North Main, Blacksburg
October 13 8 p.m.	The Peoples Debate, between candidates for U. S. Senate from Virginia, Ed Gillespie (R) and Mark Warner (D), sponsored by LWV-VA and AARP, Richmond, televised on PBS and CBS.
October 14 11 a.m.	LWV-MC Board Meeting, Community Room, Blacksburg branch of the Montgomery Floyd Regional Library

Bulletin Sponsors

Warm Hearth Village, Blacksburg's Retirement Destination - (540) 552-9176

Runabout Sports – A Great Place for Shoes (540) 552-9339

Education Programs & Services LLC – Wayne “Dempsey” Worner (540) 552-8807

Companion Animal Clinic, Inc., Blacksburg (540) 552-6800

JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TODAY

Become a member of the League of Women Voters. The annual membership fee is \$50. This payment includes local, state, and national membership dues. Members receive The Virginia Voter, and The Montgomery County Bulletin. Email: Membership@lwvmcva.org.