

# Elections Have Consequences – Part II

By Sherry Zachry, LWVFA Program Director (With editing by Therese Martin and Karole McKalip)

This month we continue our conversation about the importance of voting in all elections, of understanding the issues and what can happen when people do not vote. We learned in September that holding a November General election every year in Virginia was intentional, and that among other things, can contribute to low voter turnout in local and statewide races held in non-presidential election years, to say nothing of being expensive. We learned that low turnout and **who** goes to the polls can create unforeseen results, even in presidential election years, and that those results impact the quality of life and laws in our communities and state. We also learned about the effects of gerrymandering, or partisan redistricting, on voter turnout, competitiveness and candidates who run to represent the district.

October's material explores how a handful of votes can alter the trajectory of various policies that are adopted by state and local jurisdictions. We'll look at specific legislation connected to League positions that delegates and senators introduced in the 2017 General Assembly and the process it followed; sometimes its ultimate fate was determined by one or two votes. Also informed by our League positions, we will point out some areas of concern that we should be discussing with the candidates running for Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General and House of Delegates.

## The Difference a Few Votes Can Make!

According to the Department of Elections chart in September's *Fairfax VOTER* of statewide voter turnout, 43 percent (2,253,418) of over 5 million registered voters elected the Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General in 2013. Vote totals for the candidates, by office, were:

- For Governor, Terry McAuliffe received 1,069,789 votes (47.7%) and Ken Cuccinelli received 1,013,354 votes (42.5%) out of 2,241,071 votes cast for governor, with 7% of votes cast for other candidates.
- For Lt. Governor, Ralph Northam received 1,213,155 votes, with 980,257 votes going to Earl Walker Jackson, Sr. out of 2,201,637 of total votes cast for Lt. Governor (note drop off in total votes from governor's total).
- For Attorney General, Mark R. Herring received 1,103,777 votes, and Mark D. Obenshain received 1,103,612 votes out of 2,212,851 total votes cast for Attorney General. Both candidates received 49.9 percent of the total (with 0.2 percent going to other candidates). The difference separating the winner from the loser was 165 votes! (Note: Herring's lead had grown during the recount following the election, however the recount was dropped when Obenshain conceded.) The total of votes cast for Attorney General was more than for Lt. Governor but 28,220 less than for governor. Wonder what

difference those 28,220 votes would have made in the outcome? <sup>1</sup>

So, another thing to note about voting in gubernatorial election years is that when people do not cast a vote for every office on the ballot, the outcome can affect who gets to govern, appoint cabinet members and agency heads, and who adjudicates policies.

How did the election of 2013 change the course of events for the next four years? Let's look at one example, the election of Mark Herring as Attorney General who won by only 165 votes. The *New York Times* article, "Virginia's New Attorney General Opposes Ban on Gay Marriage" by Timothy Williams and Trip Gabriel, published January 23, 2014, says it all:

*Asserting that Virginia had too often been on the "wrong side" of justice on civil rights matters, the state attorney general asked a federal court on Thursday to invalidate the state's ban on same-sex marriage, calling the law unconstitutional and oppressive.*

*The move by the attorney general, Mark R. Herring, a Democrat who took office this month, was the first indication of how consequential last November's elections in Virginia, in which Democrats won all three top elected positions from Republicans, may turn out to be. Mr. Herring, a former state senator, narrowly defeated Mark Obenshain, a Republican state senator.*

*The decision to drop support for the gay marriage ban was an abrupt shift from the positions taken in the past by the state's socially conservative elected officials, and put Virginia on a path to be the first Southern state to allow same-sex marriage. Republican officials*

*swiftly denounced the decision, calling for Mr. Herring's resignation.* <sup>2</sup>

From that point, many legislative and judicial decisions took a different path from the preceding four years. Another point of great concern to the League is and has been, in the area of elections and voting legislation and implementation. The appointment and veto power of the governor have prevented the adoption of new voting restrictions under the current administration and have allowed the least restrictive implementation of laws enacted by the previous administration—photo ID being an excellent example.

As we will see when examining specific legislation, the Governor has used his veto power frequently to stop legislation that he deemed not appropriate for Virginia. In some cases, one or two votes would have overridden that veto and the legislation could have become law (if both Houses had ultimately overridden the veto). That is another example of how one or two votes can make a difference.

### **Using League Positions to Support or Oppose Legislation**

As you know, the League (at all levels: national, state, regional and local) uses a process of study and consensus on selected governmental functions to arrive at a statement of belief about the topic which is called a “position.” When we use the phrase “influence public policy through education and advocacy,” we mean that League advocates on issues on which we have a position—advocacy can be educating the public (and elected officials) about the issue or lobbying in support of or opposition to the issue.

The official lobbying (such as letters to the editor, testifying at public hearings or in legislative committee meetings) in the name of the League of Women Voters is done ONLY by the president or her designee. However, when members and friends are informed about the issue and asked to “take action” (contact your elected official) through an Action Alert or some form of advisory, they always take such action as an individual—an individual who has been educated about the issue by the League’s position.

In this article, we are focusing on Virginia’s General Assembly session of 2017 with respect to legislation that relates primarily to the LWVUS (national) and LWV-VA (state) positions. Sometimes, a regional position (LWVNCA) is relevant also. LWV-VA monitors legislation connected to League positions throughout the General Assembly session, and often the LWV-VA legislative coordinator or president speak to legislators, at committee and subcommittee hearings about issues of League concern.

*(The positions-in-brief of the LWVUS and LWV-VA are furnished in Addendum A which is posted on the LWVFA website, [www.lwv-fairfax.org](http://www.lwv-fairfax.org), along with the October 2017 Fairfax VOTER that contains this article—see October Unit Discussion Groups.)*

### **Setting Legislative Priorities and Following Legislation**

Each year the LWV-VA sets out which legislation we expect to focus on in the upcoming General Assembly session (based on League positions). These priorities are approved by the LWV-VA board (upon recommendation of the Legislative Coordinator) in December most legislation will have been filed.

The LWV-VA List of Legislative Priorities for the 2017 Session included positions on election laws, voting rights and voter registration, gun control and firearms safety, adult justice, offender re-entry, immigration, human trafficking, fracking, redistricting and reapportionment, mental health, health care, meeting basic human needs, transparency in government (citizens’ right to know / participate), restoring civil rights of felons, equality of opportunity and Equal Rights Amendment. Specific bills about these issues were followed by LWV-VA, and Action Alerts urging support or opposition were sent out by LWV-VA as the legislation progressed through the General Assembly. Below, we break out a few of the bills and explain what happened to them. *(The List of LWV-VA Legislative Priorities for 2017 is included in Appendix B and posted on the LWVFA website, as noted above. The specific positions relating to LWV-VA’s legislative priorities are noted on the list.)*

### **A Few Facts About the Virginia General Assembly**

Recognized as the oldest continuously operating legislative body in the U.S., the Virginia General Assembly meets in two-year segments. The first year (which follows the election of the entire House of Delegates the previous November), the body meets for 60 days—the long session; the second year, it usually meets for 45 days—short session. (Although the Virginia Constitution provides that the short session be limited to 30 days, for the past decade or more, the short session has been extended to 45 days, as is allowed in the Constitution.)

The 2017 session was the second year of the 2016-2017 biennium. More than 2,950 pieces of legislation were introduced; of that total, 836 became law. Of the 2,950 pieces of legislation, 242 bills were carried over from the 2016 session; once a bill is defeated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the session, it must be re-introduced in a new biennium to be considered again. The governor vetoed 49 bills; none of his

2017 vetoes were overridden.<sup>3</sup>

As you can see only a little over one third of the legislation introduced became law; a lot of legislation never gets a hearing or a vote because it “dies” in the subcommittees to which it was assigned (mostly in House subcommittees). Members of the volunteer group known as Transparency Virginia (TVa) met on a regular basis during the 2017 legislative session and monitored the three areas of transparency they have followed since the group’s formation in 2015. 1) TVa monitors the notice that is given for subcommittee and committee meetings so that citizens and advocates may observe or participate in them; 2) TVa believes that all bills should receive consideration by a committee or subcommittee; 3) TVa believes that all votes on bills should be recorded by name, not just by an up or down voice vote.

In its April 2017 Annual Report, Transparency Virginia reported, “**87.9 percent** of the bills defeated in the House of Delegates were dispensed **by a voice vote** [in subcommittees] without recording who voted for or against the bill. Only **12.1 percent** of the 636 bills defeated **received a roll-call vote.**” Other findings cited:

- 85% of the bills defeated or left in the **Senate received recorded votes**. All but 13 of the bills that died without a recorded vote were defeated by the Senate Rules Committee.
- Fewer House bills died on unrecorded votes in 2017 than in 2016, but the number is greater than in 2015. More Senate bills died on unrecorded votes than in the previous two years.
- Eighty-five of 140 legislators signed a letter to the clerks of the House and Senate asking that electronic voting be built into all committee and subcommittee rooms in the new General Assembly Building, and if possible, into the Pocahontas Building.<sup>4</sup>

This lack of transparency was decried in a May 9, 2017, editorial by the *Virginian-Pilot online* titled “Seeking more openness in Richmond,” which pointed out that legislators use this tactic to get rid of controversial bills without accountability, saying in part:

*MAKING A CASE for openness to the Virginia General Assembly is an often thankless and frustrating endeavor. Lawmakers, particularly those who hold leadership posts, consistently demonstrate a penchant for secrecy and a disdain for accountability. They adhere to that despite knowing that the public would be better informed*

*were they to more fully embrace transparency in state government. Thus, bills die in voice votes so there are no fingerprints when controversial measures are quietly snuffed out. Others are simply tabled, never even earning the privilege of a voice vote, much less a robust debate.*<sup>5</sup>

Next, we will see how some legislation that the League cares about has repeatedly received this treatment, creating frustration for proponents of legislation such as “No-Excuse Absentee Voting” and various bills to reform the redistricting process.

### What Happened to These Bills?

Of all the 2017 legislation that LWV-VA tracked and about which various Action Alerts were sent to our members and friends, we have chosen the following to demonstrate how some legislation of concern to the League (both in support and opposition) fared in the 2017 General Assembly.

These bills were researched using the General Assembly LIS [Legislative Information System; LIS home <http://lis.virginia.gov/lis.htm> which is a searchable database of ALL legislation introduced in the Virginia General Assembly. Using the LIS format, first is Bill Number, Sponsor’s name, the “title” in bold, followed by a summary of the intent of the legislation. The timeline of progress is shown next, which gives the ultimate fate of the bill and at what point it failed or passed, including the actual vote, where possible, to show margin of passage or failure. Bills are grouped under League position headings shown in italics.

### Positions: LWV-VA Government / Election Laws

#### LWVUS Representative Government / Voting Rights

**HB 1428** – Hyland F. “Buddy” Fowler, Jr.  
**- Photo Identification would be required with the mailed request for an absentee ballot application.** Companion bill: **SB872**] (**LEAGUE OPPOSED**)

**Summary:** Requires any voter submitting an application for an absentee ballot by mail or by electronic or telephonic transmission to a facsimile device to submit with his application a copy of one of the forms of identification acceptable under current law. The bill exempts military and overseas voters and persons with a disability from this requirement. This bill is identical to **SB 872**.



**Fate of Bill:**

02/07/17 House: VOTE: PASSAGE (61-Y 35-N)  
 02/17/17 Senate: Passed Senate (21-Y 19-N)  
 02/21/17 House: Bill text as passed by the House and Senate (HB1428ER)  
 02/21/17 House: Enrolled Bill communicated to Governor on 2/21/17  
 03/03/17 Governor: Vetoed by Governor  
 04/05/17 House: House sustained Governor's veto (*No vote recorded*)

**Bill Failed****HB 1598 - Mark L. Cole - Voter registration; proof of citizenship required to register to vote in state and local elections. (LEAGUE OPPOSED)**

**Summary:** Requires persons applying to register to vote to provide proof of United States citizenship in a form enumerated in the bill. An applicant who does not provide such proof of citizenship shall be registered to vote in federal elections only. An applicant who does provide such proof of citizenship shall be registered to vote in federal, state, and local elections. The bill provides that any person who is registered in the Commonwealth on January 1, 2018, will be deemed to have provided proof of citizenship. The bill directs the general registrars to indicate on each registered voter's registration record whether such voter is registered to vote in federal, state, and local elections or in federal elections only.

**Fate of Bill:**

02/01/17 House: VOTE: PASSAGE (64-Y 33-N)  
 02/20/17 Senate: Re-referred to Courts of Justice  
 02/21/17 Senate: Left in Courts of Justice

**Bill Failed****Positions: LWV-VA Government/ Elections Laws****SB 844 – Janet D. Howell - Absentee voting; no-excuse in-person available 21 days prior to election. (LEAGUE SUPPORTED)**

**Summary:** Allows for any registered voter to vote by absentee ballot in person in any election in which he is qualified to vote without providing a reason or making prior application for an absentee ballot. The bill makes absentee voting in person available beginning the twenty-first day prior to the election and ending at 5:00 p.m. on the Saturday immediately preceding the election. The bill retains the current provisions for voting an absentee ballot by mail, including the application requirement and the list of statutory reasons.

**Fate of Bill:**

01/31/17 Senate: Incorporates SB979 (Dance)  
 01/31/17 Senate: Incorporates SB1002 (Ebbin)  
 01/31/17 Senate: Incorporates SB1295 (Vogel)  
 01/31/17 Senate: Failed to report (defeated) in Privileges and Elections (7-Y 7-N)

**Bill Failed****SB 1581 – Mark J. Peake - Voter registration; verification of social security numbers. (LEAGUE OPPOSED)**

**Summary:** Requires the general registrars to verify that the name, date of birth, and social security number provided by an applicant on the voter registration application match the information on file with the Social Security Administration or other database approved by the State Board before registering such applicant. The bill also requires the general registrars to verify annually that the name, date of birth, and social security number in the registration record of each registered voter in the registrar's jurisdiction match the information on file with the Social Security Administration or other database approved by the State Board. The State Board is authorized to approve the use of any government database to the extent required to enable each general registrar to carry out the provisions of this section and to promulgate rules for the use of such database. The Department of Elections is required to provide access to the general registrars to the Social Security Administration database and any other database approved by the State Board. The Department of Elections is further required to enter into any agreement with any federal or state agency in order to facilitate such access.

**Fate of Bill:**

02/06/17 Senate: Read third time and passed Senate (21-Y 19-N)  
 02/22/17 House: VOTE: PASSAGE (65-Y 34-N)  
 03/07/17 Senate: Bill text as passed Senate and House (SB1581ER)  
 03/07/17 House: Signed by Speaker  
 03/10/17 Senate: Signed by President  
 03/13/17 Senate: Enrolled Bill Communicated to Governor on 3/13/17  
 03/13/17 Governor: Governor's Action Deadline Midnight, March 27, 2017  
 03/20/17 Governor: Vetoed by Governor  
 04/05/17 Senate: Senate sustained Governor's veto (20-Y 20-N)  
 04/05/17 Senate: Requires 27 affirmative votes to override veto  
 04/05/17 Senate: Reconsideration of Governor's veto agreed to (40-Y 0-N)  
 04/05/17 Senate: Senate sustained Governor's veto (21-Y

19-N)

04/05/17 Senate: Requires 27 affirmative votes to override veto

**Bill Failed**

**Positions: LWVUS Social Policy/ Immigration**



**HB2000** - Charles D. Poindexter- **Sanctuary policies prohibited (LEAGUE OPPOSED)**

**Summary:** Provides that no locality shall adopt

any ordinance, procedure, or policy that restricts the enforcement of federal immigration laws

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee for Courts of Justice on February 3, 2017)

No locality shall adopt any ordinance, procedure, or policy that restricts the enforcement of federal immigration laws to less than the full extent permitted by federal law.

**Fate of Bill:**

02/22/17 Senate: Defeated by Senate (20-Y 20-N)

02/22/17 Senate: Reconsideration of defeated action agreed to by Senate (40-Y 0-N)

02/22/17 Senate: Passed Senate with amendment (21-Y 19-N)

02/23/17 House: Senate amendment agreed to by House (65-Y 34-N)

02/23/17 House: VOTE: ADOPTION (65-Y 34-N)

03/07/17 House: Signed by Speaker

03/10/17 Senate: Signed by President

03/13/17 House: Enrolled Bill communicated to Governor on 3/13/17

03/13/17 Governor: Governor's Action Deadline Midnight, March 27, 2017

03/27/17 Governor: Vetoed by Governor

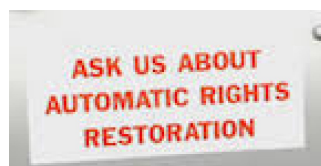
04/05/17 House: VOTE: OVERRIDE GOVERNOR'S VETO (65-Y 34-N)

04/05/17 House: (67 affirmative votes required to override)  
**Bill failed**

**Positions: LWV-VA Social Policy/ Restoration of Civil Rights For Felons**

**SJ 253** - Rosalyn R. Dance - **Constitutional amendment (first resolution); qualifications of voters and executive clemency (LEAGUE SUPPORTED)**

**Summary:** Authorizes the General Assembly to provide



by law for the automatic restoration of civil rights for persons convicted of nonviolent felonies who have completed service of their sentences. The amendment retains the Governor's authority to restore the civil rights of persons convicted of violent felonies who have completed service of their sentences.

**Fate of Bill:**

01/03/17 Senate: Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

01/20/17 Senate: Assigned to P&E sub: Constitutional Amendments

01/31/17 Senate: Failed to report (defeated) in Privileges and Elections (7-Y 7-N)

**Bill failed**

**Positions: LWV-VA Government/ Redistricting; LWVUS Representative Government/ Redistricting**

**SJ 290** - Howell - **Constitutional Amendment; Redistricting reform:**

The criteria for electoral districts should say, "No electoral district shall be drawn for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring any political party, incumbent legislator or member of Congress, or other individual or entity." **(LEAGUE SUPPORTED)**



**Fate of Bill**

02/06/17 Senate: Read third time and agreed to by Senate (31-Y 9-N)

02/14/17 House: Subcommittee recommends passing by indefinitely (5-Y 2-N)

02/17/17 House: Passed by indefinitely in Privileges and Elections (14-Y 7-N)

**Bill Failed**

**Positions: LWVUS Social Policy/ Gun Control;**

**LWV-VA Firearms Safety Resolution**



**SB1362** - Dick Black - **Carrying concealed weapons; exemption for nonduty status military personnel. (LEAGUE OPPOSED)**

**Summary:** Provides that a member of the Virginia National Guard, Armed Forces of the United States, or Armed Forces Reserves of the United States in a nonduty status may carry a concealed weapon wherever such member may travel in the Commonwealth, provided that such member is carrying his valid military

identification card. [Identical **SB1297**-Vogel was incorporated]

#### **Fate of Bill**

01/19/17 Senate: Incorporates SB1297 (Vogel)

01/23/17 Senate: Engrossed by Senate - committee substitute SB1362S1

01/24/17 Senate: Passed Senate (22-Y 18-N)

02/16/17 House: Subcommittee recommends reporting with amendment (4-Y 0-N)

02/17/17 House: Reported from Militia, Police and Public Safety with amendment (16-Y 6-N)

02/22/17 House: Passed House with amendments (67-Y 32-N)

02/22/17 House: VOTE: PASSAGE (67-Y 32-N)

02/23/17 Senate: House amendments agreed to by Senate (22-Y 17-N)

03/13/17 Senate: Enrolled Bill Communicated to Governor on 3/13/17

03/24/17 Governor: Vetoed by Governor

04/05/17 Senate: Senate sustained Governor's veto (20-Y 20-N)

04/05/17 Senate: Requires 27 affirmative votes to override veto

04/05/17 Senate: Reconsideration of Governor's veto agreed to (40-Y 0-N)

04/05/17 Senate: Senate sustained Governor's veto (21-Y 19-N)

04/05/17 Senate: Requires 27 affirmative votes to override veto

#### **Bill Failed**

*Note: LWV-VA Gun Safety Task Force Chair (and LWVFA member) Ruth Hoffman has prepared additional information on this legislation and other firearms safety legislation which will be available as a Resource for discussion meetings.*

#### **Some Observations**

Of legislation followed by the League as highlighted in this article, we had several successes in that the bills we OPPOSED failed, albeit some because of the governor's veto—maybe a bit too close to passing:

- **HB 1428** – Hyland F. “Buddy” Fowler, Jr. - Photo Identification would be required with the mailed request for an absentee ballot application. [Companion bill: SB872]
- **HB 1598** - Mark L. Cole - Voter registration; proof of citizenship required to register to vote in state and local elections
- **HB2000** - Charles D. Poindexter- Sanctuary policies prohibited
- **SB1362** - Dick Black - Carrying concealed weapons; exemption for nonduty status military personnel.

Conversely, some we SUPPORTED also failed—and did not get very far in the process:

- **SJ 253** - Rosalyn R. Dance - Constitutional amendment (first resolution); qualifications of voters and executive clemency [restoration of civil rights of felons]
- **SJ 290** - Janet D. Howell - Constitutional Amendment; Redistricting reform
- **SB 844** – Janet D. Howell - Absentee voting; no-excuse in-person available 21 days prior to election.

Two Bills that we SUPPORTED and were ENACTED INTO LAW:

- **HB2217** - David J. Toscano- Addresses confidentiality program; victims of sexual violence and human trafficking
- **HB1912** - Joseph R. Yost - Absentee voting; eligibility of persons granted protective order (effective July 1, 2017). The enactment of this bill brings the total number of valid reasons for voting absentee to 20.

#### **Too Close for Comfort**

In our May 2017 article on the Dillon Rule, we talked about pre-emption—the state taking back authority previously granted to local jurisdictions. **HB2000**, which intended to prohibit “sanctuary cities” in the state, is a prime example of pre-emption where the state takes away, or limits, autonomy previously granted to localities. Note the narrow margin by which the governor's veto was sustained in the House (65-34) —**two more votes** would have overridden his veto—and if the Senate had also voted to override (by a 27-13 vote—both houses must override), a local jurisdiction's right to declare itself a “sanctuary city” would have been pre-empted, or taken away, by the state. That is uncomfortably close in our opinion and reminds us that we must be vigilant and learn about the views of the candidates who want to represent us.

#### **What Do We Do Now?**

Circling back to our September article on the effects of low voter turnout, several suggestions for increasing voter turnout are mentioned in Tina Rosenberg's June 13, 2017, opinion article in the *New York Times*. In her article, “Increasing Voter Turnout for 2018 and Beyond,” among other things, she offered the following “fixes”:

- Recruit better candidates to inspire voters and create competitive races.
- Reach out to high schools to register students before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and before they move on to college or other endeavors.

- Allow same day (Election Day) voter registration.
- Provide mail-in ballots (now in three states: Oregon, Washington and Colorado).
- Establish Automatic Voter Registration (AVR).<sup>6</sup>

Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) not only simplifies the voting registration process; it can increase voter turnout. According to Rosenberg, Oregon—the first state to institute AVR—had the largest increase in turnout of any state between 2012 and 2016.

As of August 2017, the Brennan Center reports that 10 states and the District of Columbia have approved automatic voter registration and that 32 states have introduced automatic registration proposals this year (2017). The states that have approved AVR are: Alaska, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia.

Brennan explains AVR this way:

*Automatic voter registration makes two transformative, yet simple, changes to voter registration: Eligible citizens who interact with government agencies are registered to vote unless they decline, and agencies transfer voter registration information electronically to election officials. These two changes create a seamless process that is more convenient and less error-prone for both voters and government officials. This policy boosts registration rates, cleans up the rolls, makes voting more convenient, and reduces the potential for voter fraud, all while lowering costs.*<sup>7</sup>

The Brennan article mentioned Virginia is one of the 32 states that has introduced legislation to make automatic voter registration the de facto method, whereby people are registered to vote unless they “opt out”—rather than having to “opt in” to be registered as has been the previous process.

On September 27, 2016 (National Voter Registration Day), Governor McAuliffe initiated the “Governor’s Challenge in High School Voter Registration” and continued the Challenge to the last week of April 2017 when he proclaimed April 23-29, 2017 as “Virginia High School Student Voter Registration Week.” The LWV-VA is one of the partnering organizations, with LWVFA listed among six other local Leagues in Virginia that participated in the Challenge. LWVFA continues to make engaging high school students in the area a top priority.

## Concluding Thoughts

Although the Commonwealth may take a while to institute “mail-in voting”—or never will—it has improved the overall electoral process in many ways since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, notwithstanding its voter ID laws. We hope further enhancements such as no-excuse, in-person absentee voting, automatic voter registration, and a fairer redistricting process will have a positive effect on voter turnout.

Changing the redistricting process in Virginia to remove partisan considerations by having an independent body, not the legislators, draw the lines should also increase voter participation. If a bipartisan redistricting commission composed of people (not elected officials) representing geographic distribution and demographic diversity draws compact districts according to natural geographic and jurisdictional boundaries and communities of interest without regard to the political leanings of its residents, we can achieve districts that promote competitiveness of quality candidates and overall voter enthusiasm, where “voters choose the politician, rather than having the politician choose the voters.”

We believe the League’s priorities toward expanding the vote are well placed and are encouraged that LWV-VA and LWVFA have embraced those goals, along with continued emphasis on a better redistricting process. As LWVFA continues to reach out to under-served populations, high schoolers and to the community at large, it promotes the value of registering to vote and the importance of exercising that privilege at all opportunities. Educating the voter about how to engage the candidates, the importance of voting in local, state and primary elections and why that matters needs to become the primary focus of our Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) efforts.

## Sources:

1. Virginia Department of Elections, <http://historical.elections.virginia.gov/>
2. Williams, Timothy and Gabriel, Trip, “Virginia’s New Attorney General Opposes Ban on Gay Marriage”, *New York Times*, January 23, 2014  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/us/new-virginia-attorney-general-drops-defense-of-gay-marriage-ban.html>
3. 2017 General Assembly Session Statistics, <http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?ses=171&typ=lnk&val=08>
4. Transparency Virginia, 2017 Annual Report, <https://transparencyvirginia.wordpress.com/2017/03/31/transparency-virginias-2017-annual-report-on-legislative-transparency/>
5. “Seeking more openness in Richmond,” *Virginian-Pilot online* Editorial. May 9, 2017.  
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6. Rosenberg, Tina, "Increasing Voter Turnout for 2018 and Beyond," *New York Times*, June 13, 2017  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/13/opinion/increasing-voter-turnout-2018.html?emc=edit\\_tnt\\_20170617&eml\\_thmb=1&nid=3728989&ntemail0=y](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/13/opinion/increasing-voter-turnout-2018.html?emc=edit_tnt_20170617&eml_thmb=1&nid=3728989&ntemail0=y)
7. Brennan Center for Justice, <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/automatic-voter-registration>

## 2017 House of Delegate Candidate Forums

There are only a few more Candidate Forums planned for the House of Delegates, but we still need your help. Please sign up to volunteer on our website: <https://www.lwv-fairfax.org/>

**We have divided Fairfax County into three regions:**

- Eastern Region Delegate Districts: 38, 39, 43, 44, 45, 49
- Central Region Delegate Districts: 35, 37, 41, 42, 53
- Western Region Delegate Districts: 34, 36, 40, 48, 67, 86

**To find your district:** <http://www.elections.virginia.gov/citizen-portal/index.html>

### Fall 2017 House of Delegates Candidate Forum Schedule

- Central Region (In Person): Thursday, September 28
- Western Region (Televised): Monday, October 2
- Eastern Region (In Person): Thursday, October 12
- Sully District (In Person): Wednesday, October 25

## Help Wanted to Assemble "Facts for Voters!"

Would you like to help with the 2018 edition of "Facts for Voters?" We have a need for a few more "editors". This means taking a page, checking all the information, updating and editing it, which requires phone calls and emails.

(Facts, Cont'd on Page 5, Column 1)

## Discussion Questions

1. Do you have anything to add about the importance of voting in local and state elections?
2. Which one or two legislative issues are you most interested in or concerned about? On the local level? On the state level?
3. What other General Assembly legislation do you want to know about, if any?
4. What else do you want to ask the candidates in November's election?
5. What can you do to encourage people to vote in ALL elections?

## Fairfax City Unit Hosts Successful Candidate Forum

The Fairfax City Unit of the LWVFA hosted a Special Election Candidate Forum for the open Fairfax City Council Seat on August 30. The forum was standing room only, with over 115 in attendance. Fairfax City residents got to learn more about the two candidates, Karen Habitzreuther and Jennifer Passey running in the Special Election that will be held on September 12, to fill the open City Council seat. The City of Fairfax's government access television station, Cityscreen-12, also filmed the forum for replay on Verizon FIOS and Cox Channel 12. The forum was also available for viewing on the City of Fairfax website.

To watch the forum, go to candidate forum on the Fairfax City website: [http://fairfax.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=11&clip\\_id=1801](http://fairfax.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=11&clip_id=1801)



Kathleen Pablo is shown moderating the forum.