

THE WEST VIRGINIA VOTER

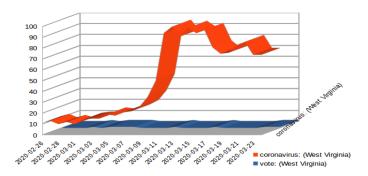
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Coronavirus vs Voting

By Jonathan Rosenbaum, President

Call to actions: First please, please, protect humanity and yourself from the coronavirus. Second, during a time when almost everyone's attention is on this first call to action, please take an additional action to get the word out to as many people as possible that all West Virginians can safely vote from home. This graph generated from data from Google Trends reveals that searches by West Virginians for the word "coronavirus" far exceed searches for the word "vote," in fact, there are many days where there are no searches for the word "vote." To me this implies that the pandemic has become a threat not only to our lives, but to democracy. WV League members will need to be more diligent than ever to defend democracy!



The League learned on March 19 that Secretary of State Mac Warner had invoked his emergency rulemaking authority to allow anyone in WV to vote by absentee ballot. Since that point we have been in communication with the office pointing out areas for improvement. On March 26, Secretary Warner announced that mail-in absentee ballot applications will be sent to every registered voter in WV! Please read, Julie Archer's detailed guide in this Voter. Several of us from the League attended a Zoom meeting hosted by Rapid Response WV, a coalition designed to coordinate local efforts to reduce the impact of the pandemic; we discussed how to help maximize voter turnout via absentee ballots by engaging a grassroots educational effort. Please help this effort by becoming a volunteer at https://rapidresponsewv.org/.

Who could have predicted we would be celebrating our 100th birthday in the way we are now? Face to face meetings have been replaced by online meetings, public candidate forums are being replaced by streaming candidate forums, and friendly phone calls, seemingly long lost to our society, have incredibly come back into vogue. Feel free to host your next meeting at our free communication service at https://chat.lwvwv.org, I can be reached quickly here about any questions you may have. Stay safe and healthy!

Absentee Voting Available to Anyone During the Corona Virus Emergency

By Julie Archer

Many are wondering how the COVID-19 crisis will impact the West Virginia's 2020 primary and judicial elections. Two weeks ago, the Secretary of State announced that every registered West Virginia voter is eligible to vote absentee during this public health emergency. Today (April 1), Governor Justice announced that he is using his emergency powers to delay the primary until June 9, past the anticipated peak of the coronavirus outbreak.

In the meantime, county clerks are moving forward with plans to send an absentee ballot application to all registered voters unless they have already requested or submitted an application. The application will be in the form of a postcard that is specific to COVID-19 as the excuse to request a ballot. You can expect to receive the application in the mail sometime during the week of April 6. The Secretary of State and county clerks recommend that voters return their applications as soon as possible. Once your application is approved, the county clerk will mail you a postage prepaid absentee ballot with instructions.

We encourage you to avoid in person voting and take advantage of this option, as this is the safest way to vote while protecting your health and the health of others. Another way to observe physical distancing precautions and help limit the number of people congregating at any one site at a given time is to early vote at a community voting location. Early voting is now scheduled to take place from May 27 – June 6. Because West Virginia was able to plan ahead, hopefully the election can take place without the confusion and disruptions that occurred in other states that held elections in March, as the outbreak began to worsen. However, we should anticipate another delay if the coronavirus outbreak has not abated or intensifies.

For things to go smoothly, new poll workers will be needed to help administer the election. You can help by contacting your county clerk and volunteering to serve as a poll worker, if you aren't part of a more at-risk group (or living or caring for someone who is). To be prepared, we should also anticipate changes in polling locations, as well as longer waits with the additional measures that need to take place to ensure sanitation. With more people voting absentee, we also have to expect it to take longer to get the election results.

No matter how you vote, we want to make sure you have the information you need to participate in our elections and to do so safely, so stay tuned to <u>GoVoteWV.com</u> for updates. LWV-WV will also be posting updates on our Facebook page and website.

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WEST VIRGINIA and the ANNIVERSARY OF THE 19TH AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

by Helen Gibbins

WEST VIRGINIA AND WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

On June 4, 1919 after 72 years of suffragists organizing, protesting, parading, lecturing, and being abused, the 19th amendment passed Congress giving all women in the US the right to vote. Now it was up to three fourths of the state legislatures, 36 states, to pass the amendment allowing all women in the U.S. the right to vote.

After relentless campaigning by suffragists, 33 states had ratified the Amendment. Lena Yost led the charge for West Virginia to be the 34th state and it was a cliff hanger. In February 1920, Governor Cornwell called a special session of the legislature. The House passed it, but the Senate was deadlocked. Sen. Jesse Bloch, who was in favor of the amendment, was vacationing in California. Suffragists called Senator Bloch urging him to come home for the vote. He hurried to Cincinnati by a private train, subsidized to the tune of \$5,000 by the suffrage supporters and continued on to Charleston, arriving at 2 a.m. When Sen Bloch broke the tie, West Virginia became the 34th state to pass the amendment, and the ratification was verified on March 10.

19th AMENDMENT CELEBRATIONS IN WEST VIRGINIA

Starting in the fall of 2019 women and men representing organizations from all over West Virginia came together through conference calls to plan the celebration of the centennial of the passage of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote. One of the coordinating committee's initiatives was to organize a celebration on February 17 at the Capitol.

Tables were set up outside both chambers so that the public could learn more about the past and present efforts to promote women's equality at the ballot box as well as in the present sphere of influence.

The LWVWV was among others to sponsor a table. One of the most interesting display was prepared by the League of Women Voters of Morgantown/ Monongalia. It featured the role men played in the suffragist movement. Other events of the day included lectures, re-enactments, proclamations by both

houses, a rally on the steps of the Capitol, a commemoration ceremony, featuring special guest Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, and a reception at the Culture Center.

But the event at the Capitol was only the official launch of the celebrations. Before February 17, lectures had already begun to make the public aware of the long struggle it took for suffragists to achieve women's right to vote. Colleges and universities are using different venues to introduce the public to the importance of the battle to get the 19th Amendment passed.

Other League projects include the League of Women Voters of the Huntington Area's Right to Vote Reader's Theater. The script highlights the major events of the suffragist's movement, but also includes the history of all groups working to attain the right to vote. It also covers the historic and present day blocks to the right to vote in our country. The LWV Huntington Area offers our script to other organizations if they wish to present a readers theater "Right to Vote" in their community. You may contact Helen Gibbins, gibbins@frontier.com, to request the script. We ask those who present the program in their communities to give credit to the League of Women Voters of the Huntington Area.

The Huntington League is also involved with Marshall University and Delta Sigma Theta in the planning of an August 26 March.

The Secretary of State's office coordinates the collaboration and a calendar among those who are planning events. To access the calendar link to the Secretary of State of WV's website -- About Us --

Centennial celebration (towards the bottom of the page).
Contact Jennifer
Gardner, jgardner@wvsos.gov if you wish to add a community event to the calendar.



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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WEST VIRGINIA 2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

By Brittany Carowick, Julie Archer and Kathy Stoltz

The League of Women Voters of West Virginia:

Supports strengthening West Virginia's water quality to reflect EPA recommended human health criteria as well as measures that will give more West Virginians access to water service that meets these standards.

Supported HB 4542/SB 679, the Clean Drinking Water Act of 2020.- HB 4542 died in House Health; SB 679 died in Senate Judiciary.

Opposed HB 4079, Exempting certain oil & gas tanks from the Aboveground Storage Tank (AST) Act - died in House Energy.

Supports strengthening disclosure requirements for the sources of political campaign expenditures, including dark money.

Supported SB 113 & SB 581, Requiring disclosure of dark money political expenditures - both died in Senate Judiciary.

Supports establishment of an independent commission to draw up redistricting plans for representatives to the US House of Representatives and the WV Legislature.

Supported HB 2445 & SB 110, Creating an independent redistricting commission (or a constitutional amendment that would create such a commission as proposed by HJR 108 & HJR 110) - HB 2445 died in House Judiciary; SB 110 died in Senate Judiciary. HJR 108 and HJR 110 died in House Political Subdivisions.

Supports measures that encourage investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency in West Virginia's homes, non-profits, businesses, and industries.

Supported HB 2973, the Local Energy Efficiency Partnership (LEEP) Act - Died in House Government Organization.

Supported HB 4172, the Modern Jobs (MoJo) Act, providing for solar energy production on formerly mined land and access to third party co-generation - Died in House Energy

Supported SB 611, Permitting third-party ownership of renewable and alternative energy generating facilities and allowing Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) - Died in Senate Economic Development

Supports maintaining expanded Medicaid coverage for the hundreds of thousands of West Virginians who rely on it for health care.

Supported SB 648, Providing dental coverage for Medicaid-enrolled adults - Passed the legislature! Signed by the Governor.

Supported HB 4416, Expending Medicaid coverage

to 1 year postpartum for women up to 300% of FPL - Passed one House committee but died in House Finance.

Opposed HB 4018, Requiring able-bodied adults receiving Medicaid benefits to be participating with the requirements of a work, education, or volunteer program - Passed the legislature; awaiting Governor signature as of 3/29.

Supports measures that will assure that all West Virginia children have access to adequate nutrition in their homes and schools.

Supported HB 2794, Establishing the Summer Feeding for All initiative - Passed one House committee but died in House Finance.

Supports measures to eliminate discrimination and to ensure equality of opportunity for education, employment, and housing for all West Virginians regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

Supported SB 270, Relating to unlawful discriminatory practices covered by Human Rights Act and Fair Housing Act - Died in Senate Judiciary.

Other measures we supported/opposed: The League supported bills to increase access to contraceptives for West Virginia women, including

HB 4059, Increasing access to Long Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs) - Passed committees but died on the House Calendar.

HB 4198, Permitting a person to obtain a 12-month supply of contraceptive drugs - This passed the legislature! Signed by the Governor.

The League supports providing paid family and medical leave through proposals such as

HB 4189, Providing paid family and medical leave for state employees, - Passed House Judiciary with an amendment, but died in House Finance.

HB 4385/SB 65, Creating the Family and Medical Leave Insurance Benefits Act - HB 4385 died in House Judiciary; SB 65 died in Senate Banking & Insurance.

The League supports measures to prevent wage discrimination through proposals such as

SB 62/HB 4428, Creating the Katherine Johnson and Dorothy Vaughan Fair Pay Act of 2020 - Died

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LWV WV Legislative Priorities

cont. from pg 3

The League supports efforts to decrease stigmatization of and normalize access to treatment for substance abuse disorders, therefore

Supported HB 4102, Expanding access to opioid antagonists (naloxone/NARCAN) to respond to overdose emergencies - This bill passed the legislature! Signed by the Governor.

Opposed SB 286, Prohibiting syringe exchange programs - Died

The League opposes funneling public money to private and religious schools through vouchers, tuition tax credits, and education savings accounts.

Opposed SB 515, Creating Education Savings Accounts - Died

The League supports regulating firearms for public health and safety. We oppose anti-gun control legislation including

Opposed SB 96, Eliminating the right of municipalities to enact restrictions on firearms at events - Passed as amended. Signed by the Governor.

Opposed HB 2519, the "Campus Carry Self-Defense Act" and other measures that permit the carrying of concealed weapons on the campus of a state institution of higher education. - Died

The League supports options for increasing revenue for local governments, and opposes any tax reform measure that negatively affects the state's or local governments' ability to provide necessary services, including

Opposed SJR 8, Eliminating the property tax on business inventory, machinery and equipment - Died Opposed SJR 9, Authorizing the Legislature to eliminate the business personal property taxes - rejected by the Senate.

The League believes that a constitutional convention under Article V of the U.S. Constitution is a threat to every American's constitutional rights and civil liberties.

Opposed SCR 4, Urging Congress call a constitutional convention to propose amendment on congressional term limits - Died.

The League supports equity under the law and the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment

Supported SCR 14, Urging Congress declare Equal Rights Amendment to US Constitution - Died.

ABSENTEE VOTING cont. from pg 1

How to Request an Absentee Ballot:

NOTE: All registered voters will be mailed an absentee ballot application for the primary election. If you are registered, you do not have to request the application. It is automatically being mailed to you.

Check your registration status at <u>GoVoteWV.com</u>. The Secretary of State says that voters can expect to receive an absentee ballot application in the mail sometime during the week of April 6. If you are not yet registered, register and request an absentee ballot using the instructions below.

1. Obtain the West Virginia Absentee Ballot Application:

Download and print the <u>application</u> from GoVoteWV.com; or

Call or email your county clerk to request the application be mailed to you (see county clerk directory at GoVoteWV.com for contact information)

2. Fill out the application in your own handwriting

Note: Make sure to check the first box for "Illness, injury or other medical reason which keeps me confined" in Section 4 of the application

3. Return the application to your **county clerk** by

Mail; or Email; or Fax

Note: Your county clerk must receive your application by June 3.

Voters may only apply and vote absentee in the county where they live. To make sure your registration is upto-date, click "Check Your Voter Registration Record" at GoVoteWV.com.

Registered voters may request their absentee ballots from now until June 3.

The deadline to register to vote for the Primary Election is May 19 and can be completed at GoVoteWV.com.

Absentee ballots must be postmarked on or before election day (June 9), or hand-delivered the day before the election (June 8).

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TAXATION REPORT

By Vicki Conner

Taxation bills are recorded under three subject topics: Taxation, Taxation-Personal and Corporate; and Taxation-Property. The bulk of them fall under Taxation.

Taxation had 183 bills registered and 12 went to a "completed legislation" status and are awaiting action by the Governor as of 3/7/2020.

Taxation-Personal and Corporate had two bills submitted by the House, both died in committee.

Taxation—Property had one bill submitted by the House, it died in committee.

The main bill that everyone was watching was SB 837 Providing exemptions from ad valorem taxes for certain types of personal property. It was not completed, dying in House Finance.

The WV Constitution specifies how the Legislature deals with property taxes. In order to change the constitution, the Legislature must pass a resolution that then must go before the voters. In 2020, that resolution became Senate Joint Resolution 9 (SJR9). The Senate decided that before they could take such a resolution to the voters, they had to be able to specify what changes the Legislature was likely to make. They didn't want to ask voters to approve a constitutional amendment that was open ended. So, it became necessary to pass SB 837 which specified how personal property taxes would be changed if the voters allowed the Legislature to change them. So, SB837 was necessary to be passed before SJR9. SB837 passed the Senate by 1 vote.

Senate Joint Resolution 9, if approved by the voters in the November general election, would amend the West Virginia Constitution, allowing the Legislature to reduce or fully repeal any "species" of personal property tax. SJR 9 is required so that all the proposed changes can take effect. Senate Bill 837's effectiveness is contingent on the adoption and ratification of that proposed constitutional amendment. SJR9 must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Senate or receive affirmative votes from at least 23 members in order to move it to the House, which must then pass it before it can be put before the voters. SJR9 FAILED in the Senate, with 18 in favor and 16 opposed.

So, although SB837 was passed by the Senate and sent to House Finance, without the ability to change the constitution, it was essentially dead.

See up to date WV census respone rates at https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html

HEALTHCARE REPORT

By Betty Barrett

In this legislative year with health worries of another kind, as corona virus concerns grew, the West Virginia Legislature passed some major improvements in bills before this session. At this writing, they have not all been signed by the Governor. It was termed a good session for public health

The Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Waiver program had a long waiting list from previous years. The 2021 budget (SB 150) includes \$19.8 million to provide services to all of the 1,084 on the current waitlist. The budget also includes \$2 million for potential corona virus action.

HB 4543 caps the maximum monthly copay for insulin for West Virginians who have private health insurance at \$100. West Virginia has a large population of people with diabetes who need insulin to live. Some reported they had been paying up to \$1,000 a month.

SB 648 adds dental care for adults over 21 with Medicaid health coverage, estimated at over 300,000. This has been a major gap in health care for years, and passed with bipartisan support.

HB 4494 creates a tobacco cessation task force, to prevent tobacco use by children and young adults, especially with the popularity of vaping and e-cigarettes in those age groups.

HB 4198 will require health insurance plans that cover contraceptives to provide for 12-month refills of contraceptive drugs. SB 288 eliminates prior authorization for longacting reversible contraceptive devices. It also eliminates a 30-day waiting period for tubal ligation sterilizations for low income residents.

Besides these positive bills, several problematic bills were defeated. HB 4018 would have placed work requirements into adult Medicaid eligibility. This perennial legislation would have led to at least 37,000 West Virginians losing health coverage, and the state losing millions in Medicaid dollars. This year the bill was never considered.

SB 286 would have banned syringe exchange programs. Data collected over the years has shown that this program, critical to harm reduction, reduces the risk of transmitting HIV, viral hepatitis and other blood-borne diseases.

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EDUCATION REPORT

By Shirley Rosenbaum

West Virginia Department of Education (last updated: 03/25/2020 4:00 p.m.)

Message from State Superintendent: https://wvde.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Clayton-Superintendent-Memo-March-22-FINAL.pdf

- *Schools will remain closed until at least Monday, April 20, 2020.
- *Feeding children is our number one priority. Counties are transitioning to alternative ways to sustain service. Please continue to visit wvde.us/COVID19 for updated information on food distribution.
- *In order to continue to receive federal funding to feed children, county school systems must continue to manage the school meals programs. State agency and partner resources are available to support school systems with food preparation and distribution.
- *Every county will continue to assess their distribution plans and are encouraged to transition to multi-day food packs. This will also allow counties to use frozen food inventory and guidance for food preparation will be provid-
- *The WVDE will continue to assess food supply and distribution. Professional and service personnel, WVDE staff, and community organizations across the state will support county food distribution. Counties should follow normal food safety protocol and allow volunteers to assist.
- *Forthcoming guidance regarding student engagement will be grounded in compassion, communication and common sense rather than traditional compliance measures that most are accustomed to in our education community.
- *The WVDE has requested and received a waiver to suspend all state assessments and federal accountability for the 2019-2020 school year.

NATURAL RESOURCES REPORT

By Helen Gibbins and Julie Archer

The WV Rivers Coalition prepares comments to agencies that regulate state and federal water protection. If we agree with the comments and receive permission from the LWVUS when the comments are directed to a national agency, the LWVWV adds its name to the letters. If the

comments are directed to a state agency, our state League may decide whether they should sign the letters. Since October we added our name to the comments on the following issues:

Comments to the WV DEP -- "Rockwool is a mineral wool insulation manufacturing facility proposed in Jefferson County. The issues included the Construction Stormwater Permit (WVR108876), which regulates erosion control and stormwater runoff during construction and the Industrial Stormwater Permit (WVG611896), which regulates permanent stormwater management following completion of the facility".

Comments to the WV DEP -- West Virginia Wetlands Rapid Assessment Method (WVWRAM)

Comments to the Environmental Protection Agency -- Opposition to the EPA's proposal to weaken standards for Effluent Limitation Guidelines for power plants.

Comments to the EPA on the disposal of coal ash disposal.

In the late hours of the 2020 WV Legislative Session the Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 46 to request a public drinking water study to identify the potential presence of per- and polyflouroalkyl substances (PFAS). This study will help identify which community water systems are contaminated by PFAS chemicals.

For details on the action (and inaction) on bills related to clean water, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and other natural resources issues see updates from our partners at the WV Rivers Coalition, WV Environmental Council, and WV Solar United Neighborhoods at https://wvvivers.org/policy-2/policy/, https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/westvirginia/.

HEALTHCARE

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SB 284 was purported to protect West Virginians with preexisting conditions if the Affordable Care Act was removed by the courts. It would have been ineffective.

One bill that failed to reach passage stage was SB 752, which would have expanded implementation of the 2017 state law that legalized medical marijuana. The House Rules Committee removed it from the active calendar.

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HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS OF WEST VIRGINIA

Submitted By Jonathan Rosenbaum

Letters and interviews of Henrietta Fulks of Wheeling, who was one of the leading suffragists, give information of the formation of the League of Women Voters of West Virginia. In 1947 a document from the LWVUS stated, "using the Recognition Standards for local Leagues as adopted by the Convention, the LWVUS recognizes as local Leagues within West Virginia: Charleston, Fairmont, Huntington and Morgantown."

The WV League was organized in Huntington in October 1920, and the first president was Mrs. John Ruhl while Henrietta Fulks was elected Legislative Chairman. Mrs. Fulks was the second president, unanimously elected by the state League at the Parkersburg Convention in 1922. At that time she held the distinction of being the youngest state president in the country.

When asked how she felt about assuming the presidency, she threw up her hands and said "Scared to death. I did not see how I could do it. Our first president, Mrs. John L Ruhl was a brilliant Mt. Holyoke graduate. I did not think my talents matched hers in any way. But all of of LWVWV studies shows: the members kept pledging their assistance. Francis Johnson, a talented piano teacher from Parkersburg, said 1960's – Constitutional revision and education to Mrs. Fulks, 'If you will take it, I'll publish a bulletin.' I thought this was too good an offer to refuse, and so I accepted."

That is how the League published the first issue of the West Virginia VOTER in January, 1923. There was even a League office in Wheeling, combining state and local League headquarters.

Henrietta Romine Fulks was presented a Distinguished Service Certificate by Carry Chapman Catt at the last convention of the National Suffrage Organization. The certificate entitles Henerietta Arbenz Romine Fulks a place on the Honor Roll of the brave army of men and women who have rendered distinguished service to the cause of Women's Suffrage in America."

During its first 20 years, it appears that the WV League was loosely organized, and local leagues came and went. In fact, after those few sentences in Mrs. Fulks' letters and interviews, there isn't any documentation about the WV League until 1943. The earliest bylaws on record were dated November 12, 1943.

The earliest minutes on file are from the 1944 Convention in Charleston, which is called the "First Convention

of the League of Women Voters of West Virginia." The president at the time was Mrs. Frank A. Thomas. The treasurer reported a total of \$35.11. Attendance consisted of 12 delegates and six officers, all from Charleston, Fairmont, and Huntington.

Delegates elected officers, adopted bylaws, budget and program. The total budget was \$320. They also adopted an "Orientation Course" for local leagues. The dinner speaker was Mrs. Charles Heming, President of the League of Women Voters of New York and a member of the National Board.

The first program was "A study of state-wide candidates (it appears that they didn't distinguish between voters service and program) and a study of the "merit system," later to be called "civil service." Delegates also approved appointing a committee to look into the feasibility of voting machines in all counties.

After that first consensus on civil service, a chronology

1950's – education

1970's – Election laws, environment, taxation, juvenile services

1980's – taxation, education, jury selection, annexation

1990's – ethics, taxation, health care, judicial selection

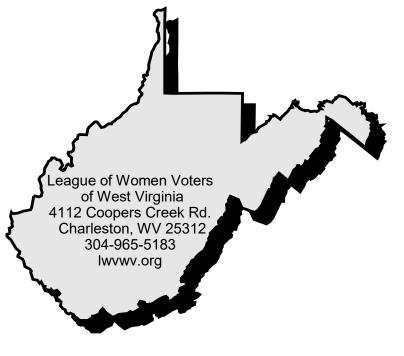
2000's – library financing



Helen Gibbins, President LWV of Huntington addresses the crowd at the 19th Amendment Celebrations at the Capitol in Charleston on February 17.

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the local League in those counties. To join at the state level, send		

JOIN THE LEAGUE! The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. If you live in Cabell, Jefferson, Monongalia, or Wood County, please contact the local League in those counties. To join at the state level, send a check or money order payable to LWVWV to: Teresa Koon, Treasurer, LWVWV, 4112 Coopers Creek Rd., Charleston WV 25312. Dues are \$40 for individuals, \$60 for a household, and \$20 for students. Because we are a lobbying organization membership dues are \$40 for individuals, \$60 for a household, and \$20 for students.

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