



Voter

League of Women Voters of Loudoun County

November 2008

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Consensus Meeting
November 24, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
Leesburg Airport Conference Room
To address the Study of the
Restoration of Civil Rights of Felons in
Virginia

What is Consensus? Webster defines “consensus” as “agreement in matters of opinion.” For the League of Women Voters, however, consensus has a far broader meaning. A household word in League parlance, it means agreement among a substantial number of a representative group of members—not just a simple majority—reached after sustained study and group discussion. Consensus is a prerequisite to the League’s taking any position on national, state, or local governmental issues. Consensus also determines what action, if any, is to be taken on the item after consideration. No action is taken where there is a lack of agreement, and although this may be a disappointment to some members at times, it is essential that when a League position is announced, the members are not only informed but are in basic agreement.

What Consensus is Not--Since determination of consensus within a group is an interpretive process, it is not decided through a vote of the membership. Voting has an inherent rigidity which makes it difficult to reach essential agreement. The State and National League, for instance, seek broad areas of agreement based on a good cross-section in size, type, and region as well as on substantial numbers. This kind of evaluation is a more interpretive and therefore a more valuable way of reaching agreement than that of counting noses.

See inside, page 2- 4, for more information on consensus and the Consensus Meeting 24 Nov!

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President's Column

It has been three months since the last *Voter* was mailed or e-mailed. A lot has happened since then. The Board of Directors met in August, two Board members attended LWVVA Workshops in Richmond, and several League members helped out at the Registrar's office (and continued to do so through October).

In September the Board held Training and Retreat. As a result, we now have a plan for the year and have distributed portfolios so there are people to carry out the plan. Jennifer Severance is Voter Editor and will work with Denise Donnelly on Voter Service. Carla Wiley will handle the Membership Portfolio. Glenda Parsons will head up Program, which includes Unit Meetings, Program Planning, and Consensus and Shelley Tamres has Communications and Public Relations. Ro Pelletier will work with Glenda and Shelley by taking charge of Action and Advocacy and publicity. If you would like to work with Shelley on the Web site, please contact her at web@loudoun.va.lwvnet.org.

Several members helped register voters at the Leesburg Corner Outlet Mall and during Emancipation Day in Purcellville. We also conducted homeowner elections at Leisure World and RiverBend. Betsy Mayr did an outstanding job on the *Voters' Guide*, which will appear in *The Connection* newspapers. If you don't receive *The Connection*, the *Voters' Guide* is on the Web at www.loudoun.va.lwvnet.org.

Thanksgiving is a month away, but I want to tell you how thankful I am for this very active and involved Board. A complete list of activities is listed in the Calendar. We would love to have you help.

Marla McIntyre

President

MarlaMcIntyreLWV@gmail.com

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Consensus Meeting
November 24, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
Leesburg Airport Conference Room
To address the Study of the
Restoration of Civil Rights of Felons in Virginia

Background

At the 2007 spring convention, LWV-VA delegates approved a "Study of the Restoration of Civil Rights of Felons in Virginia." Background information packets were distributed at the 2007 Fall Workshops and posted on the web site: www.LWV-VA.org where they are still available. Workshop participants learned about the current process under Governor Kaine and the realities of the current political climate. The link for the information and discussion about the restoration of felon rights is at www.lwv-va.org/files/rj_consensus_questions.pdf.

During 2007-2008, 10 local Leagues conducted interviews which are part of this report. This fall, local Leagues will be holding consensus meetings on this topic with reports due December 16, 2008.

The Civil Rights in Question are the right to:

- Register to Vote
- Hold public office
- Serve on a jury
- Serve as a notary public

These civil rights must be restored before applications to carry or own a firearm or to seek a pardon can be made. Since it is often the right to vote that is of most direct interest, our research focuses on this aspect.

Restoration of Voting Rights in Virginia Today

In Virginia, only the Governor can restore voting rights. The Constitution of Virginia, Article II, Section I states: “*No person who has been convicted of a felony shall be qualified to vote unless his civil rights have been restored by the governor or other appropriate authority.*” All applications are sent to the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth for processing. An application can be filed through the Circuit Court, but this is an exceptional route. The number of felons who have had their voting rights restored by any one governor has varied greatly. For example: Gov. Robb restored rights to 1,180; Gov. Allen, to 480; Gov. Gilmore, to 238; Gov. Warner, to 3,486 and Gov. Kaine, to 878 during his first 15 months in office.

Nearly 300,000 Virginia citizens, representing 4-5% of Virginia citizens who are age 18 or older, are unable to vote because of a felony conviction, despite having completed their sentences and been released from probation or parole. About half of these citizens are African-American. As many as one in every six African-American men in Virginia cannot register to vote for this reason.

In 2002, Governor Warner established a modified system for non-violent felons: The application form was reduced from 15 pages to 1 page and the waiting period from 5 years to 3 years.

All felons who want their civil and voting rights restored must:

- *Complete their sentence
- *Complete any assigned probation or parole
- *Pay all fines and court costs
- *Have no pending charges
- *Have no DUI violations for the last 5 years.

For a non-violent felony conviction, the person must wait 3 years and complete a 1-page application. For a violent felony conviction, drug manufacture/distribution or an election law violation conviction, he/she must wait 5 years, complete a longer application form, and provide 3 letters of recommendation. Court records are checked to verify the information provided on all applications.

Applications may be obtained from:

- **Voter Registrars**
- **Probation and Parole Offices**
- **Secretary of the Commonwealth: Micah Womack, Restoration of Rights Director,**
P.O. Box 2454, Richmond VA 23218-2454; (804) 692-2531
<http://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/JudicialSystem/Clemency>

Criminal Disenfranchisement Laws in the United States

Nationwide, a patchwork of different state rules and laws prevents an estimated 5.3 million citizens from voting. Since 1997, sixteen states have enacted reforms. In 2002 there were nine states that permanently denied the right to vote to felons and now there are only two. Virginia and Kentucky are the only states left which bar people with felony convictions from voting for life. The Brennan Center for Justice at the New York School of Law gives the following summary. (http://www.brennancenter.org/page/-/d/download_file_48642.pdf)

- Permanent disenfranchisement for all people with felony convictions, unless governor approves individual rights restoration. KY, VA
- Permanent disenfranchisement for at least some people with criminal convictions, unless government approves individual rights restoration. AL, AZ, DE, FL, MS, NV, TN, WY
- Voting rights restored upon completion of sentence, including prison, parole, and probation. AK, AR, GA, ID, IA, KS, LA, MD, ME, MO, NE,* NJ, NM, NC, OK, SC, TX, WA, WV, WI (*2 year waiting period)
- Voting rights restored automatically after release from prison and discharge from parole (Probationers may vote). CA, CO, CT, NY, SD
- Voting rights restored automatically after release from prison. DC, HI, IL, IN, MA, MI, MT, NH, ND, OH, OR, PA, RI, UT
- No disenfranchisement for people with criminal convictions. ME, VT

CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

1. Should the restoration of civil rights be automatically granted to felons?

If yes, should it be restored

- A. Immediately upon release from incarceration
- B. Immediately upon completion of probation or parole
- C. Upon fulfillment of all legal obligations, including payments of fees, fines, court ordered restitution, and A and B listed above.

2. Should the procedures for the Restoration of Civil Rights be the same for all felons?

If no, which of the following should have more stringent procedure:

- A. Non-violent offenses
- B. Violent offenses
- C. Drug distribution offenses
- D. Drug manufacture offenses
- E. Election Law offenses

3. Should the current process be made:

- A. easier to understand
- B. more accessible
- C. more transparent and fair?

If yes, in what ways? (Please list suggestions)

These questions will be discussed at the Consensus Meeting, November 24, 2008, 7-9pm at the Leesburg Airport Conference Room. The more members we have in attendance, the stronger our consensus will be.

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# LWVVA Summer Workshops

By Shelley Tamres

Betsy Mayr and I attended the State League's Board Meeting and Summer Workshops on Aug. 22-23. State League has determined that Redistricting will be the Action Priority this year. Liaison assignments were made for the 2008-09 year. State League Treasurer Therese Martin will continue to be Liaison to our League.

The Workshops began with a Redistricting Panel with four wonderful speakers: Del. Joseph Bouchard, 83rd HOD district (VA Beach); Dr. Michael McDonald, Associate Professor, GMU; Rev. C. Douglas Smith, executive director of VA Interfaith Center on Public Policy; and John Stone, representing Future of Hampton Roads, a business organization. Some points that came out of that panel include:

- The General Assembly should *not* be able to amend what comes out of a redistricting commission...they should only have an up/down vote.
- Del. Bouchard predicted that only a Constitutional Amendment will pass in 2009, not a bill. This will allow them to vote down the Constitutional Amendment in 2010 during the 2nd vote. (A Constitutional Amendment must be passed in 2 successive GA sessions before going to the voters.)
- One of the speakers referred to the "Gerrymander 7": House Speaker William Howell; Majority Leader H. Morgan Griffith; John O'Bannon; Mark Cole; M. Kirkland (Kirk) Cox; S. Chris Jones, Terrie Suit.
- It's very important to get the business community involved since they provide the most campaign money. Business leaders can't understand why the GA can't compromise and get things done...businesses do it all the time.
- Need to get criteria in place that both sides agree to.
- "Competition" as a message translates to "nasty campaigns" to many voters. A better message would be: "We don't want candidates choosing voters, we want voters choosing representatives." Another message is to eliminate "funny lines"...look for communities that have been split up in order to gerrymander.

## Swedish Delegation to Visit Loudoun on Election Day

The League of Women Voters of Loudoun County (LWVLC) is hosting a delegation of Swedish dignitaries who are in the United States to observe the US election process. League of Women Voters President Marla McIntyre will take the delegation to visit three polling places in Loudoun County on November 4, 2008.

“Loudoun County is a great choice for the Swedish delegation. They wanted to visit an area that reflected a possible political change from Republican to Democrat while getting both the urban and rural flavor at the polling places,” said McIntyre.

The delegation includes 19 representatives from Sweden’s two largest political parties, the press, unions, and public relations consultants.

The visit is sponsored by *Fokus* Magazine, Sweden's leading news magazine ([www.fokus.se](http://www.fokus.se)).

## State, Local, & NCA News

### LWVUS National Popular Vote Compact Study Web Page

Delegates at the LWVUS Convention 2008 voted to study the advisability of using the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact among the states as a method for electing the U.S. President. [The text of the Compact](#), which describes the way the NPV will operate, is now available on the LWVUS Web site. In addition, the LWVUS NPV Study Committee is researching and writing materials, which will be posted online later this fall. The deadline for the NPV consensus is May 1, 2009.

### National Capital Area

Melpi Jeffries welcomed the presidents from the NCA local Leagues to the annual President's Brunch on October 3. Marla McIntyre represented the Loudoun LWV. Nancy Tate, LWVUS Executive Director, reviewed the activities currently occupying the time and energy of the LWVUS Board and staff. Activities for public include keeping [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org) current including presidential candidate statements. Other activities include *Freedom of Expression Through Film* campaign, *Helping America Vote* project, updated *VOTE* brochure in English and Spanish, updated 18-30 *Voter Issues Paper* for young people. All of these activities are being done with external sources of funding.

### State - LWVVA

President Olga Hernandez reported that a senatorial debate had been scheduled however one of the candidates would not commit to the debate. The State League received a great amount of publicity about the refusal of this person to participate in a state wide debate. Virginia voters will have the option of selecting the type of ballots they prefer to use this year. There has been considerable debate over allowing college students to register to vote using the college address. The League has been working with the State Board of Election to resolve the issue.

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2008-09 Calendar

November

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| 4 | Tues. | Election Day
LWVLC Hosts Swedish <i>Fokus</i> Magazine Delegation |
| 7 | Fri. 10:30-12:30 | LWVNCA Board Meeting
LWVUS Office, 1730 M St 10 th Floor, Washington DC |
| 15 | Sat. 10:00 - 4:00 | LWVNCA Eleanor Roosevelt Tour,
Washington DC |
| 17 | Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 pm | LWVLC Board of Directors,
GG Restaurant, Leesburg |
| 24 | Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 pm | Unit Meeting – Restoration of Felon's Civil Rights
Leesburg Airport Conference Room |

December

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| TBD | | LWVVA Program Planning |
| 2 | Tues | LWVVA Board Meeting |
| 3 | Wed. | Women's Roundtable Pre-session & Lunch,
Richmond |
| 5 | Fri. 10:30-12:30 | LWVNCA Board Meeting
LWVUS Office, 1730 M St 10 th Floor, Washington DC |

December (continued)

- 15 Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 pm LWVLC Board of Directors,
GG Restaurant, Leesburg
- 16 Tues. Restoration of Felon's Rights Consensus Due

2009**January**

- 2 Fri 10:30-12:30 NCA Board Meeting
LWVUS Office, 1730 M St 10th Floor, Washington DC
- 6 Tues. LWVVA Program Planning Recommendations Due
- 12 Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 Unit Meeting - Review Local Positions & NCA Positions
Leesburg Airport Conference Room
- 21 Wed. Women's Roundtable
Richmond
- 26 Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 pm LWVLC Board of Directors,
GG Restaurant, Leesburg
- 27 Tues. LWVVA Board Meeting
- 28 Wed. LWVVA League Day
Richmond

February .

- 4 Wed. Bylaw change ideas to LWVVA
Women's Roundtable
Richmond
- 6 Fri 10:30-12:30 NCA Board Meeting
LWVUS Office, 1730 M St 10th Floor, Washington DC
- 11 Wed. Women's Roundtable
Richmond
- 15 Sun. NCA Program Planning Due
- TBA Unit Meeting - Alternate Forms of Government
- 18 Wed. Women's Roundtable
Richmond
- 23 Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 pm LWVLC Board of Directors,
GG Restaurant, Leesburg

March

- 6 Fri 10:30-12:30 NCA Board Meeting, LWVUS Office,
1730 M St 10th Floor, Washington DC
- TBA Women's History Month Tea
- 16 Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 pm LWVLC Board of Directors,
GG Restaurant, Leesburg
- 20 Fri LWVNCA Capitol Steps Fundraiser

April

- 3 Fri 10:30-12:30 NCA Board Meeting
LWVUS Office, 1730 M St 10th Floor, Washington DC
- 13 Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 pm Unit Meeting - Redistricting
Leesburg Airport Conference Room
- 20 Mon. 7:00 - 9:00 pm LWVLC Board of Directors,
GG Restaurant, Leesburg

May

1 Fri 10:30-12:30 NCA Board Meeting
LWVUS Office, 1730 M St 10th Floor, Washington DC
1 LWVVA Board Meeting
1 LWVUS NPV Study Consensus Deadline
2-3 Sat-Sun LWVVA Convention
Fairfax City VA
9 Sat 9:30-2:00 NCA Annual Meeting
Washington DC

June

5 Fri 10:30-12:30 NCA Board Meeting
LWVUS Office, 1730 M St 10th Floor, Washington DC
13-15 Sat-Mon LWVUS Council
TBD LWVVA Board Meeting/Board Orientation

League Web Sites

LWV US - www.lwv.org
www.vote411.org
NCA - www.lwvnca.org
LWV VA - www.lwv-va.org
LWVLC - www.loudoun.va.lwvnet.org
LWVLC Webmaster e-mail - wm@loudoun.va.lwvnet.org
LWVLC e-mail - league@loudoun.va.lwvnet.org

In Passing

Sally Ormsby, a member of the Fairfax LWV, died Monday, Sept. 15 as a result of liver cancer. She became active in LWV in the 1970s and served on the board of directors and chaired the Women's Issues and Environment Committee. She was director of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District and was involved in land-use over the years, working with the Fairfax County Citizens Committee on Land Use and Transportation. In 2006, the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations presented Ormsby with its Citizen of the Year award.

Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.

~~ Franklin D. Roosevelt

Eleanor Roosevelt Historical Tour

Enjoy a fascinating tour led by a Smithsonian guide to sites significant in Mrs. Roosevelt's life and support LWVNCA.

When: Saturday, November 15, 2008, from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm

**Gathering location: DAR Constitution Hall
1776 D Street, NW, Washington, DC**

**Price: \$65.00 includes bus and lunch at the Women's National Democratic Club
(Same tour by Smithsonian costs \$95.00)**

Some walking required.



Reservation form for LWVNCA Eleanor Roosevelt Sites Tour:

Number attending _____ at \$65.00 each. Reservation total _____.

Optional: I/We wish to donate \$ _____.

Total amount of check enclosed _____.

League member? ___ Yes ___ No League Name:

Name(s) for name tag(s): (Please print clearly)

I/We require a vegetarian lunch. Give vegetarian name(s) _____.

Mail check, payable to LWVNCA, & reservation form by Friday Nov 7th, 2008 to:

**Mrs. Barbara Sherrill
4826 North 17th Street
Arlington, VA 22207**

All proceeds will benefit the League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area. Go to www.lwvnca.org, or call 301-530-5452 for more information about the League.

Ask a Friend to Join the League of Women Voters of Loudoun County
Please add my voice to over 120,000 members and supporters nationwide!

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

_____ \$60 Individual or _____ \$90 Family (Make dues checks payable to: LWVLC)

- Please send the LWV Voter Newsletter by e-mail. *(Please provide your current e-mail address)*
- Please send notifications of League activities by e-mail. *(Please provide your current e-mail)*
- I want to support the League of Women Voters of Loudoun County with a donation so it can continue its work to promote informed participation in government. Enclosed is my donation of \$_____.

Please make donation checks payable to **LWVLC Education Fund**.
Contributions to the LWVLC Education Fund are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Mail dues and donations to: Hatsy Cutshall, Treasurer LWVLC
20371 Cockerill Rd.
Purcellville, VA 20132