



THE WEST VIRGINIA VOTER

Published Semi-annually by the League of Women Voters of West Virginia

Vol. 67 No. Spring 2024

STATE OF THE LEAGUE

Updates From: Lyn Widmyer and Julie Archer

WE MADE SOME NOISE!

Congrats to the League Legislative Action Workgroup (LLAW) for faithfully following the activities of the 2024 State Legislature! Judy Ball explains more about the session on page 2 in newsletter but here is a quick recap:

- During the 60 day session, members of the Legislature introduced 2,575 bills.
- LWVWV tracked bills within our four priority areas: Strengthening Democracy, Safeguarding Equal Rights, Protecting Children and Families, and Creating a Sustainable Future
- We sent Make Some Noise (MSN) action alerts on 25 bills - 16 we opposed, 9 we supported.
- Two bills we opposed made it through both houses and to the Governor's desk for his signature. **SB 841** will reduce unemployment benefits and became law without the Governor's signature. **HB 5105**, which would have rolled back the state's school vaccination requirements, was vetoed by the Governor.
- None of the bills we supported made it to the governor's desk to become law.

Our greatest success this year lies with the 16 bills that did NOT pass. THANK YOU for responding. Together we ARE making a difference!

2024 LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD UNDER CONSTRUCTION

With the session behind us, LLAW is working to compile the Legislative Scorecard. The 2024 Scorecard will document the votes of all 134 Legislators on bills that coincide with our four priority areas. LLAW's goal is to have this information available to voters on our website before this year's Primary Election. Can you think of a better voter education project as we head into election season? Read more in Judy's column.

LWVWV PROPOSES WORKSHOP FOR SMALL STATE LEAGUES AT NATIONAL CONVENTION

The LWVWV has applied to host a workshop at the National Convention (June 27-30) entitled "Small States Can Make a Difference." The purpose of the workshop is to share success stories, identify common challenges, and explore interest in forming an on-going small state caucus within LWV. LWVWV will take the lead. We have already identified a list of states that meet our initial criteria for recognition as a small state and LWVUS has provided us with contacts in those states.

LWVWV STATE COUNCIL SCHEDULED FOR MAY 18

Mark your calendars, and please plan to join us for this year's virtual council on Saturday, May 18. In addition to approving the budget for the coming year and receiving input and guidance on our program work, we are looking to fill some key positions: Voters' Service Chair and Nominating Committee Chair.

Our state Voters' Service Chair will play a crucial role leading our committee of local Voters' Service chairs, and implementing the committee's plans for developing election related materials and organizing LWVWV sponsored activities. The Nominating Chair will solicit recommendations for nominations for officers and directors to serve on the state board and, with the help of the Nominating Committee, prepare a slate of candidates to stand for election at the State Convention in 2025. If you're interested in serving in one of these important positions, please reach out. More information on the Council agenda will be forthcoming.

HELP WANTED

Voters' Service Chair: prepares election materials and candidate questions for statewide and congressional candidates.

Nominating Committee Chair: Chairs committee to obtain names and make recommendations for offices to be filled

League Legislative Action Workgroup (LLAW): We Made Some Noise!

By: Judy Ball, Chair, LLAW

As the clock struck midnight, March 10, the West Virginia Legislature adjourned *sine die*. That's Latin for adjourned *indefinitely*, no set date to return.

In plain English, midnight, March 10, meant: "It's OVER!"

LLAW members have been busy since the last issue of *The Voter*. Let's recap.

LLAW's View of the 2024 Legislative Session

When the Legislature opened its 2024 session on January 10, the LLAW goal was to review every bill and sort them into our four priority "buckets." From the bills that fit in those buckets, we would make decisions about which bills were important enough to ask LWVWV members to Make Some Noise.

The four buckets represent the four policy priorities established by the LWVWV Board.



Strengthening
Democracy



Safeguarding
Equal Rights



Protecting Chil-
dren & Families



Creating a Sus-
tainable Future

In total, we reviewed 2575 bills introduced during the 2024 legislative session. We filled our buckets with several hundred for tracking.

Such an immense effort required a clear division of labor:

- Judy Ball, LLAW Chair, tracked bills on Strengthening Democracy/Elections (DE) and managed the teams.
- Julie Archer, LWVWV President, was the final decision maker on which bills to highlight in Make Some Noise action alerts.
- Lyn Widmyer, LWV-Jefferson County, led communications, with able assistance from Patti Corley, also LWV-JC.

Still, to adequately monitor all priority bills, LLAW needed more help.

We are immensely grateful for the assistance of four new portfolio managers:

- Jan Gosset, LWV-Huntington Area, tracked bills on Safeguarding Equal Rights (ER)
- Nancy Ulrich, LWV-Morgantown, and Joe Golden, LWV-MAL, tracked bills on Protecting Children and Families (CF)
- Neal Barkus, LWV-Jefferson County, tracked bills on Creating a Sustainable Future (SF)

It took the whole small village to get through 60 days of legislative session.

Continued on page 3

LLAW continued from page 2

What Did the 2024 Legislative Session Accomplish?

The table below lists the 25 bills, resolutions, and policies (Medicaid) that LLAW opposed and supported during the legislative session through the Make Some Noise process. Only two of the bills were enacted and have gone to the Governor for signature. We opposed both.

In fact, this is an apt summary of the 2024 legislative session. An inordinate amount of time was devoted to bills that did not pass, and many critical issues – support for childcare, paid family leave, public education, ease of voting, ending discrimination, equal pay for equal work, evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders, environmental protections (just to name a few) – were ignored. Even the state budget was left to the last day and was deemed, for all intents and purposes, a placeholder. A special session to finish it is expected.

LLAW Doesn't Stop

With the legislative session over, LLAW has begun the work of developing the 2024 LWVWV Legislative Scorecard. The goal is to release it before the Primary Election. Early in-person voting begins May 1. The Scorecard is designed to offer voters easy-to-use information on how their legislators voted on bills prioritized by LWVWV.

You may recall, last year LWVWV had the capacity to publish a Scorecard for the first time. This year we will rely on the same model and means to deliver it.

The Scorecard will track the votes of all 134 WV state Senators and Delegates (many different from 2023) on legislation that became law from the 2024 regular session. At this writing, we know 279 bills passed both houses and went to the Governor for signature. Soon, we will know how many became law.

How Is the Legislative Scorecard Developed?

As with 2023, the purpose of the Legislative Scorecard is to report, in an easily consumable form, on the activities of the last legislative session, including votes by all Senators and Delegates.

Following the methods used for 2023, the 2024 Scorecard will begin by identifying a limited number of bills that become law. Last year that number was 25. Those 25 bills were selected to cover the four League priorities, those “buckets” we discussed above.

Bills will be selected without regard to their sponsors or which legislators supported or opposed them. Our focus will continue to be LWVWV's priorities. For League members, those may be your priorities as well.

For individuals who disagree with League positions, the Scorecard is still useful. We are always transparent about where the League stands on each bill that is included, and all legislators are included regardless of party affiliation.

What's Next?

Stay tuned for the release of the 2024 Legislative Scorecard. Use it when you decide who to vote for in May and November. And please, **VOTE**. Use your voice. Continue to Make Some Noise!

Also, soon we'll be sending out a brief survey to get feedback on the Make Some Noise process. We want to improve it, and we need your ideas on how to do that.

Make Some Noise Bills – During Session

Bill #	Position	Summary	Priority	Final status
HB 4016	OPPOSE	prohibit delivery of unsolicited absentee ballot applications to any person who did not specifically request one from the county clerk	DE	Did not pass (DNP)
HB 4593	SUPPORT	require the WV First Foundation, responsible for disbursing opioid settlement funds (about \$1 billion over 5 years), to be subject to requirements of Open Governmental Proceedings Act and Freedom of Information Act	DE	DNP
HB 4675	OPPOSE	voter suppression by requiring photo IDs to vote	DE	DNP
HB 5362	SUPPORT	protections for election workers	DE	DNP
SB 593	OPPOSE	ban ranked choice voting	DE	DNP
SB 630	SUPPORT	protections for election workers	DE	DNP
HB 4233	OPPOSE	ban non-binary on birth certificates	ER	Enacted
HB 4806	OPPOSE	mandate use of bathrooms and changing areas in schools to be based on “gender assigned at birth.”	ER	DNP
HB 5243	OPPOSE	fake Women’s Bill of Rights	ER	DNP
HB 5297	OPPOSE	ban gender-affirming care for youth	ER	DNP
HJR 27	SUPPORT	Constitutional amendment to guarantee reproductive rights	ER	DNP
SB 352	OPPOSE	abortion misinformation	ER	DNP
SB 468	OPPOSE	mandates a specific video produced by an anti-abortion organization ostensibly showing development of a fetus be shown to students in WV schools	ER	DNP
SB 495	SUPPORT	CROWN Act	ER	DNP
SB 496	SUPPORT	CROWN Act	ER	DNP
SB 515	OPPOSE	force schools to out transgender students	ER	DNP
SB 601	OPPOSE	fake Women’s Bill of Rights	ER	DNP
SB 744	SUPPORT	civil rights protections based on disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation	ER	DNP
HB 5159	OPPOSE	weakens child labor laws	CF	DNP
SB 562	OPPOSE	expand employment and training requirements for SNAP	CF	DNP
SB 614	OPPOSE	behavioral interventions in K-6	CF	DNP
SB 841	OPPOSE	reduces unemployment benefits	CF	Enacted
Not one bill	SUPPORT	Medicaid	CF	DNP
HB 4834	SUPPORT	broaden availability of solar energy production to residential consumers via community solar	SF	DNP
HB 5131	OPPOSE	reduce credit for surplus energy generated by consumer's own solar panels	SF	DNP

Make Some Noise Bills – After Session

Bill #	Position	Summary	Priority	What did we ask for?
SB 841	OPPOSE	would weaken unemployment benefits	CF	Veto
HB 5105	OPPOSE	would reduce vaccination requirements in WV schools	CF	Veto
HB 5014	SUPPORT	\$2 million appropriation for biomedical research at WVU Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute	CF	Governor vetoed the bill. LWWV opposes Veto.

Protecting Children and Families

Nancy Ulrich
Dr. Joseph Golden

Federal action on the Child Care Stabilization Act, Senate Bill 2777, was introduced before the Congress by Senator Patty Murray, Democrat, State of Washington, on September 3, 2023. The bill was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. It appears that no further action has been taken on this legislation since its introduction before the Senate.

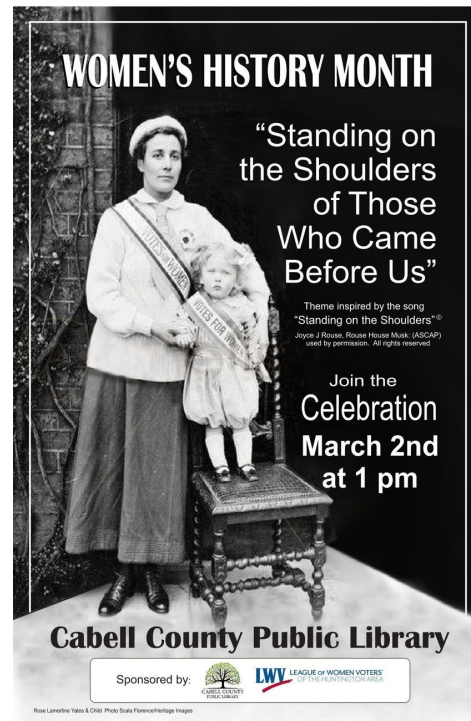
In West Virginia, Senator Mike Woelfel, representing Cabell County, 5th District, introduced legislation that provides for child care tax credits for working families. The aim of the proposed legislation, according to Senator Woelfel, was to reduce child poverty and improve availability of childcare. The Senator further contends that West Virginia ranks fourth in the nation in residence living in childcare deserts. Twenty-nine per cent of our children under six years of age are eligible for child care expense subsidies. Eighty-one per cent of those children are denied child care due to lack of childcare providers.

The proposed legislation has a tiered tax credit structure dependent upon the family income. Low income families could receive up to 50% of their childcare expenses as a credit on their tax returns. If a family does not have to pay taxes they will get their money refunded. Families that do pay taxes will have a credit on their tax return based upon their income. If a family is already receiving a subsidy for child care they cannot take advantage of another subsidy under this legislation. Senator Woelfel discussed his proposed legislation with various other legislators, however it did not pass during the 2024 Legislature, despite the issue being deemed a priority by legislative leaders

“Standing on the Shoulders of Those Who Came Before Us” LWV of the Huntington Area Marks Women’s History Month with Community Celebration

To mark Women’s History Month the LWVHA hosted a community celebration in collaboration with the Cabell County Public Library. The theme was “Standing on the Shoulders of Those Who Came Before Us” inspired by Joyce J. Rouse’s “Standing on the Shoulders.” Rouse’s song was performed at the celebration kick-off by local talent Wendy Wilson, accompanied on keyboard by Mike Campbell. The reference department at the library curated a gallery featuring the portraits of thirty women from our past and present - ten local, ten state, ten national - that remained on display through the month of March. The kick-off celebration also featured a proclamation by the mayor, recognition of celebrated women in attendance, viewing of the portrait gallery, a slide presentation of fun facts unearthed about the women during the research process, and light refreshments. Additionally, local eateries and taverns were invited to adopt an honoree, by featuring a special dish or beverage on their menu during the month of March named after a woman of significance.

For the occasion, LWVHA also produced a special edition of their newsletter highlighting the women’s accomplishments. The newsletter is available on the Huntington League page of the LWVWV website.



Memphis Tennessee Garrison moved to Huntington after a 40-year teaching career in McDowell County. Education was only part of her legacy, however, as she contributed to the founding and growth of chapters of the NAACP throughout southern West Virginia.

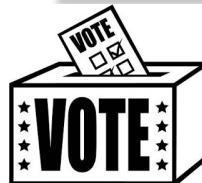


Award winning author, **Denise Giardina** has given voice to the disempowered in Appalachia. Her two novels set in the region, *Storming Heaven* and *The Unquiet Earth*, are regarded as major works in the Appalachian canon. She was a recipient of the American Book Award in 1993 for *The Unquiet Earth*.



Minnie Buckingham Harper, Winfield, was the first African-American woman to serve as a member of a state legislative body in the United States. She represented McDowell County following the death of her husband. Overcoming prejudice against African-Americans and women, Ms. Harper’s story is an unheralded triumph.

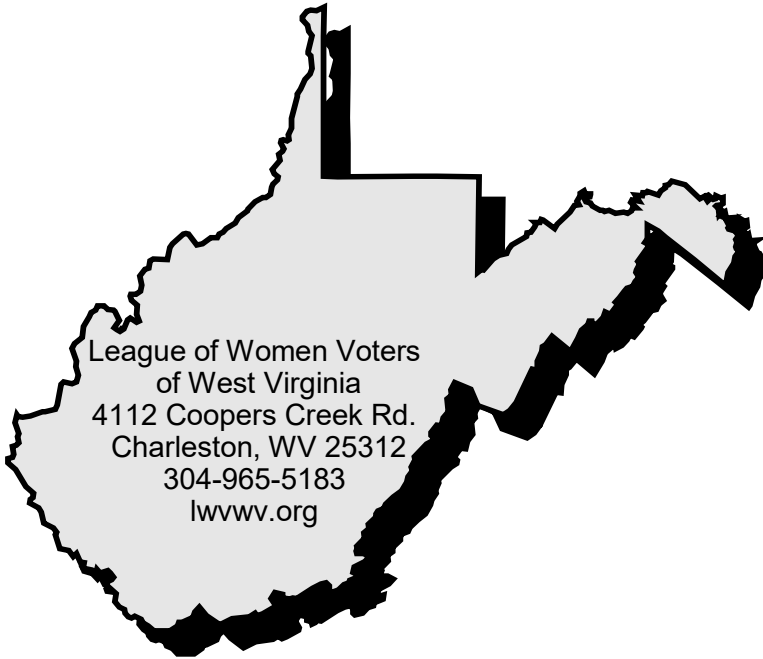
Three of the West Virginia women featured in the Cabell County Library Women’s History Month exhibit and LWVHA newsletter.



WV’s primary is Tuesday, May 14
Polls are open 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Select “Find Your Polling Place” at
GoVoteWV.com

Non-Profit Organization
 U.S. Postage PAID
 Permit No. 150
 Charleston, WV

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Teresa Koon
 Editor

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 \$0 for students. Because we are a lobbying organization, membership dues are not tax-deductible.

Name(s) _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip Code _____
 Phone _____
 E-mail _____



Director Susan Pipes
 304-279-7459
 304-279-7459
 spipes304@gmail.com
 Director Natural Resources

LWV WV Board of Directors

- President Julie Archer 304-610-9094 Julie@lwvww.org
- 1st VP Lyn Widmyer 304-279-3201 lynywidmyer@gmail.com
- 2nd VP Judy K. Ball, PhD, MPA 240-997-1222 Balljk@aol.com
- Elections Government Teresa Koon 304-590-5476 Teresa.m.koon@gmail.com
- VOTER Editor Roster Mgr. Nancy Ulrich 304-592-5262 nvulrich@gmail.com
- Secretary Carline Shaw 304-676-5449 shawcpa1@gmail.com
- Director Website and Technology Jonathan Rosenbaum 304-599-2370 jr@lwv.org
- Director Membership Shirley Rosenbaum 304-599-2370 shirley.rosenbaum@gmail.com
- Director Education Education and Membership Education and Technology