

Can you Help with the Felon Rights Study?

This October, the Montgomery County League will begin its local work as part of the Virginia League study of restoration of voting and civil rights to felons. What is at issue? According to Roger Chesley of the **Virginia Pilot**, Virginia is out of step with national standards in its treatment of ex-prisoners. It ranks with Florida, Kentucky, and Alabama in harshness of its laws. In the November 11, 2006, edition of the Pilot Chesley wrote in part that:

The tenet of "one man, one vote" makes some men less than others in Virginia. The harsh, unyielding stance that the commonwealth maintains against felons strips many of their civil rights, including voting. Felons released from prison in Virginia find it difficult to regain a semblance of citizenship. Y

For ex-felons here, however, Virginia is among the toughest states in the country to regain voting rights. Released felons must first finish supervised probation and parole. They then must wait three years if they committed a nonviolent offense, or five years for violent offenses, election fraud, or drug-distribution or manufacturing convictions. Only then can they petition the governor for restoration of civil rights. The process is so cumbersome that many individuals won't even bother to apply to the governor for restoration Y

Why debate a change in the process? Consider this: Thousands of felons are released each year in Virginia. In fiscal year 2005, for example, more than 11,800 prisoners were freed from state facilities. In June 2005, nearly 50,000 persons were on probation or parole in the commonwealth. (Mark Warner restored rights to only 3,486 individuals during his administration, more than the five previous governors combined. In contrast, Maine never takes the right to vote away from prisoners, even while still incarcerated.)

Reintegrating former prisoners in society has its place - especially for the communities they return to. Voting is just one way to do that. The issue should be given a higher priority in Virginia.

Between October and December local leagues will do community interviews to learn what exists in their area and they will collect Astories@ of how the present system has affected individuals. Judy Snoke, Action Chair, is our League=s representative on the Virginia League study group. She needs help from League members to help with the many interviews the study requires. If you are willing to help, contact Judy at judy_snoke@comcast.net or 552-5273.

Judy Snoke

News Briefs

- * Congratulations to E. Randall Wertz, Montgomery County Registrar for Elections, who has been elected to a two-year term as president of the Voter Registrars Association of Virginia.
- * Marquita Hill has just started a two-year term as the LWVMC representative on the Board of New River Community Action.
- * Congratulations to member Phyllis Albritton who has been selected by the School Board to fill the remaining term for District A.

Town Council Elections---Should They be Moved from May to December?

Blacksburg Town Council is now considering moving Town Council elections from May to November. To help them in their deliberations, last week we sent a query to all the local league presidents asking them whether the municipalities within their area had shifted municipal elections to November and what were the consequences of such a move. Although we are still awaiting some responses, we find that a number of municipalities established *ad hoc* committees to study shifting their election day. Some decided to shift, some did not. League members served on these committees.

Calendar

October 2	Montgomery County Constitutional Officers Candidate Forum, 7 PM, Board of Supervisors Meeting Room, County Government Center, 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg.
October 10	LWVMC Board Meeting, 1 PM, Mary Fessler Community Room, Blacksburg Library
October 11	General Assembly Candidate Forum, 7 PM, Board of Supervisors Meeting Room, County Government Center 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg
October 15	Montgomery County Board of Supervisors & School Board Candidate Forum, 7 PM, Roger E. Hedgepeth Council Chambers, Blacksburg Town Hall, 300 South Main Street, Blacksburg
November 6	Election Day AFirst Tuesday@
November 14	LWVMC Board Meeting, 1 PM, Mary Fessler Community Room, Blacksburg Library

We thank Phyllis Albritton, Wachovia Securities, 552-6222, for sponsoring this page.

Candidates Names for the November Ballot

October 2 Forum Constitutional Officers	October 11 Forum General Assembly Candidates	October 15 Forum Board of Supervisors and School Board
<u>Clerk of the Courts</u> Allen C. Burke (R) <i>Incumbent</i> Erica W. Williams (D)	<u>7th House of Delegates District</u> David A. "Dave" Nutter (R) <i>Incumbent</i> Peggy H. Frank (D)	<u>Board of Supervisors</u> District B: Douglas Marrs (R) <i>Incumbent</i> District E: Steve Spradlin (R) <i>Incumbent</i> William Brown (D) District F: Mary Biggs (D) <i>Incumbent</i> District G: John Muffo (D) <i>Incumbent</i>
<u>Commissioner of the Revenue</u> Sharon E. Gilbert (D) <i>Incumbent</i> Leigh Ann Teel (R)	<u>12th House of Delegates District</u> James M. Shuler (D) <i>Incumbent</i>	<u>School Board</u> District B: Penny Franklin Incumbent District E: Wendell Jones Incumbent District F: Write-In Candidates: Joe Ivers Kelly Harrison District G: Wat Hopkins Incumbent
<u>Commonwealth Attorney</u> Bradley W. "Brad" Finch (R)	<u>21st Senate District</u> John S. Edwards (D)	
<u>Sheriff</u> J. T. "Tommy" Whitt (D) <i>Incumbent</i> William E. "Billy" Wiatt (I)	<u>22nd Senate District</u> Michael J. Breiner (D) Ralph K. Smith (R)	
<u>Treasurer</u> W. Richard Shelton (D)		

Voters Guides for this election will be published in the League's October Bulletin. They will be placed on our web site: <http://civic.bev.net/lwvmc/> as soon as they are available. Voters Guides contain short autobiographies of each candidate and the candidates' answers to several League questions.

Important Election Dates:

October 9: Last day to register to vote for November elections.

November 3: Last day to vote absentee in person.

November 6: Election Day

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!

Your League received \$4405 in gifts from members and friends in our fiscal year 2006-2007. In total, 41 members and 28 friends responded to our Finance Drive. The League is indebted again to Harriett Cooper, our Finance Director.

The following members and friends have contributed to our League since the April Bulletin was published:
 Members: Bea Ake, Harriett Cooper, Elaine Head, Suzie Leslie – in memory of Ken Cooper, Joseph Merola and Catherine Dubreuil, Edie Schumacher, Daisy Stewart, Jo Ann Underwood – in memory of Dick Zody, and Millie Wiggert – in memory of Nadine Newcomb. An anonymous member donated in memory of Ken Cooper and Nadine Newcomb.
 Friends: Gerry Anderson – in honor of Mary and Chuck Houska, Ann Carter, Bernice Frith, Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Giles, Marilyn Klemperer, Janice Litschert, Leanne Mitchell – in memory of Nadine Newcomb, Jim Shuler, Sue and John Muffo, and Virginia Reilly - in honor of Rosalie Jurisson and Rosemarie Reilly.

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JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TODAY

I wish to become a member of the League of Women Voters and enclose a check payable to The League of Women Voters® of Montgomery County (LWVMC). The annual membership fee is \$40 for new members (half year dues from January 1 to May 31 are \$20). This payment includes local, state, and national membership dues. Members receive *The National Voter*, *The Virginia Voter*, and *The Montgomery County Bulletin*. Annual dues for renewing LWVMC members are \$45.

Name _____ **Phone** _____

Address _____ **E-Mail** _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Mail to:

***Betty Williams, Membership Chair, 607 Progress St., Blacksburg, VA 24060, or call 552-2357,
or email Mary Houska at mfdh@aol.com***

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