



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

BULLETIN

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P.O. Box 10133, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0133
<http://www.lwvmcva.org>

Sign Up for Great Decisions

Learn About and Discuss Foreign Policy Questions Great Decisions Programs, Wednesdays, at Library

Topics

Middle East realignment
Promoting democracy
Mexico
Cybersecurity
Exit from Afghanistan
and Iraq
State of the oceans
Indonesia
Energy geopolitics

Great Decisions is an annual eight-week, non-partisan program on international affairs prepared by the Foreign Policy Association and sponsored locally by the League. Each week participants read an analysis in a briefing book, watch a DVD in which Foreign Policy Association experts discuss that topic, and then form small groups to discuss the topic themselves.

Participants will meet in the Mary Fessler Community Room of the Blacksburg Public Library on eight Wednesdays starting Jan. 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Participants are welcome to bring a bag lunch to eat during the video if they wish.

The program is free and open to the public. The Foreign Policy Association briefing book may be purchased for \$18; however, copies also will be on reserve in the Blacksburg and Christiansburg Public Libraries for in-library use.

Participants need to register in advance so that we know how many people will be taking part in the program and how many briefing books we need to order. To join the group, please contact, as soon as possible, either Nancy Warren (951-1660), cnwarren@aol.com or Jane Sprague (961-1532), janesprague@verizon.net. Additional information is available on the Foreign Policy Association website: <http://www.greatdecisions.org>.

Descriptions of Great Decisions 2012 topics are on page 4.

Volunteers Needed for Officers of Election

Voter Registrar, E. Randall Wertz, is seeking as many new Officers of Election as possible.

In a letter to the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, he said "If past Presidential elections are any indication to what we should expect, we will have a record-breaking turnout next November and we will need all of the Officers of Election we can get.

There will be several training sessions to prepare volunteers and there will be two smaller elections March 6 and June 12 for these individuals to get some experience before the major fall election.

Contact E. Randall Wertz, General Registrar, County of Montgomery, 755 Roanoke Street, Suite 1F, Christiansburg, Virginia 24073

First Tuesday Lunch Join your League friends for lunch at 622 North Main, in downtown Blacksburg.
Jan. 3 Come by 11:45 a.m. to allow time for the group to gather and orders to be taken.

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From “acting” president Mary Houska

Nonpartisan Is Basic To Philosophy; Has Been Followed for All 91 Years

The League is Nonpartisan – Every publication of the League of Women Voters has the following statement in a prominent location.

“The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.”

President and Voter Service Chair Never Attend Partisan Meetings

League policy dictates that the President and Voter Service Chair be meticulously nonpartisan. They can have no party affiliations and can attend no meetings, coffees, conventions, etc. of a partisan nature. Neither can any elected official nor anyone running for office serve in a leadership capacity, on or off-board, in a League.

Therefore, we were shocked when, on Oct. 27, Senator Ralph Smith (R, 19th District) said to Lerone Graham, a Roanoke Times reporter, that at the national level, “The League of Women Voters is a left-wing organization that went out front endorsing Barack Obama.” No League, at any level, has ever endorsed a political candidate at any time in the 91 years of the League’s existence.

League Works By Consensus Studies on Specific Topics

The League, at the local, state, and national levels, studies issues, comes to consensus about policy recommendations resulting from those studies, and then advocates those policies to local, state, and federal government legislative and administrative bodies.

For example, this fall, all local Leagues studied the effect of federal funding decisions on PreK–12 education in the United States. Then, each League held a consensus meeting. The consensus questions for this study and our own League’s responses are now posted on our web site www.lwvmcva.org. To read the policy positions of the League at the national, Virginia, and Montgomery County levels that have resulted from many years of consensus studies, look in the LWV-MC Member Handbook or go to the web sites of the LWV-US, the LWV-VA and the LWV-MC. Judge for yourself whether Senator Smith’s characterization of LWV-US policy positions is correct.

Community Meetings Held To Discuss School Redistricting Next Meeting will be Feb. 15

The Montgomery County School Board and Board of Supervisors decided that, in replacing the old Prices Fork Elementary School, it would build extra capacity to relieve the crowding in some County elementary schools, especially Kipps Elementary in Blacksburg and some Christiansburg elementary schools. Those over-crowded schools are using mobile classrooms. The largest number of mobile classrooms is at Falling Branch Elementary School in Christiansburg. The old Prices Fork Elementary School had a student capacity of 200; the new Prices Fork Elementary School has a capacity of 640 children.

To move children from crowded schools to the new Prices Fork School would require redrawing the elementary school districts. Furthermore, the new high schools being constructed in Blacksburg and Riner and the renovated Middle School in Riner also present opportunities for accommodating more students. The School Board approved a large committee to study the redrawing of school districts. December 7, about 100 interested citizens came to the first Community Dialogue with members of the Redistricting Committee, the School Board and Montgomery Public Schools administrators. According to David J. Bisset, a News Messenger reporter, most of the citizens attending that meeting did not want school districts to be redrawn.

A second community dialogue meeting will be held February 15. A survey was sent home to parents on Dec. 8. That survey is available on the Montgomery County Public Schools web site, www.mcps.org.



Mary Houska, at the front, welcomes everyone to the General Assembly Forum

Summary of Preparations for League's 2011 Candidate Forums

by Mary Houska, acting president and Voter Service chair

2011 Candidate Forums – 38 candidates competed for 23 offices elected by voters in the County. The League held five Candidate Forums: Blacksburg and Christiansburg Town Councils, the Board of Supervisors and School Board, the Constitutional Offices, and the General Assembly. Thirty-four candidates responded to our Voter Guide questions. Three who did not respond had no opposition; one, Joseph Yost (R, 12th House District), did have opposition.

Candidates without opposition were not asked to participate in the Forums. With the exception of “Mel” Huber, a candidate for Blacksburg Town Council, all the candidates for Town and County positions who were invited to participate in the Candidate Forums, did so. Mr. Huber declined to participate in two other Blacksburg Town Council Forums sponsored by the local AARP and Citizens First.

The League sent out its invitations to participate in the Oct. 27 General Assembly Candidate Forum by email on September 12. Joseph Yost, the Republican candidate for the 12th House District, replied by email on September 13, accepting our invitation. Don Langrehr (D, candidate for the 12th House District), John Edwards (D, candidate for the 21st Senate district), and Brandon Bell (I, candidate for the 19th Senate District) all accepted our invitation. Ralph Smith's (R, candidate for the 19th Senate District) Campaign Manager telephoned on October 10 saying that Senator Smith had a conflict. Dave Nutter's (R, candidate for the 21st Senate District) Campaign Manager called later, at first saying Delegate Nutter had another engagement, but then saying he might be able to change that engagement since Senator Edwards was positively coming. The

week of the Forum, Delegate Nutter posted on his web site that he was not going to participate in our Forum. I hadn't checked his web site. Joseph Yost sent me an email on October 26 saying he would not participate in our Forum because he was attending a reception given by the Rich Creek Chamber of Commerce. That week, Yost declined to participate in two Candidate Forums in Radford, notifying the sponsors just minutes before those Forums were to begin.

The morning of October 27, I received an email from someone named E. Lacey Bradshaw pointing out that the League should cancel that evening's Forum because none of the Republican candidates are coming. The last sentence of the email read, “For future reference, having a moderator that is less biased would probably get both sides of the aisle to join you in having a successful event.” This was the first of several similar emails that I received from Bradshaw. Two hours later, I received an email from someone using the name Jason Williams asking why we haven't canceled the Forum. On Friday, October 28, Williams sent another email to me that included the sentence, “If you would like people to take your organization seriously, you may want to try a little harder to be non-partisan.” Neither the researchers at The Roanoke Times nor a couple of our talented researchers have been able to locate anyone named Lacey Bradshaw; it may be a pseudo-nom. We are not clear about who Jason Williams is either.

But the drama did not end there. The video of the General Assembly Candidate Forum at the County Government Center

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Protocol: Invite Candidates With Opposition; Introduce Those With No Opposition

Continued from page 3

was recorded without sound and was, therefore, useless. There were three people in the recording booth.

Please read the article on the League's nonpartisanship in this newsletter. This year I am both the acting President and the Voter Service Chair. I have not attended a party function of any kind in forty years.

A year ago, the Democratic Party could have complained about our League favoring a Republican candidate. In 2010, a Johnson City, TN, television station's news programming made much of former Congressman Rick Boucher's (D, 9th District) refusal to participate in debates and forums with Morgan Griffith, his Republican challenger. Boucher's campaign manager had not even replied to any of these invitations and did so the day this program was aired. I was interviewed a couple times by these Johnson City reporters and I presume that I was quoted as being critical of Congressman Boucher's unwillingness to participate in or acknowledge our Forum invitation.

After consulting with some politically astute members, we decided it was important that a Forum Moderator be well-acquainted with the policy questions important for voters for those particular positions. Meghan Dorsett was Moderator in the Constitutional Officers Forum, I was Moderator for the Christiansburg Town Council and Board of Supervisors/School Board Forums and Christian Trejbal, an editorial writer for The Roanoke Times, was Moderator for the Blacksburg Town Council

and General Assembly Forums. Our League was delighted that Mr. Trejbal was willing to moderate two forums for us. He had given a brilliant talk on redistricting at the Virginia League Convention in Blacksburg this May. He clearly understands Virginia legislation and policy issues. In League Forums, Moderators ask questions submitted by citizens either online or in the audience; those questions have been reviewed for relevance and fairness by either the Voter Service Chair (online questions) or two reviewers at the Forum (audience questions). Moderators may ask follow-up questions to clarify some positions.

Let us reconsider what a determined group of harassers were attempting to do. Joseph Yost had accepted three invitations to participate in candidate forums and he declined all of them at the last minute. The two Radford Forums were moderated by someone else, not Christian Trejbal. Based on my telephone conversation with Dave Nutter's Manager, I didn't know whether he was coming or not. Nutter has participated in many of our Forums and programs and Roanoke Times editorials have often been favorable to him. He and his campaign manager made a last minute decision about how to best utilize the next nine days before Election Day.

No special interest group will ever dictate to the League of Women Voters who will officiate at our candidate forums or in any of our programs. We are very serious about being nonpartisan. We will not be bullied by anyone or any organization.

Great Decisions Topics

Continued from page 1

Middle East realignment by Augustus Richard Norton

The popular revolts and upheaval of the Arab Spring have radically changed the face of the Middle East. What lies ahead for the Middle East's transition to democracy? What are the prospects for the governments that have held out in this new order? With many longtime U.S. allies ousted, how will the U.S. recalibrate its relations with the new regimes?

Promoting democracy by Larry Diamond

The U.S. has had a history of advancing and supporting democracy around the world. What place does democracy promotion have in U.S. foreign policy today? With a choice of tools ranging from economic aid to military force, what are the appropriate yet effective methods that the U.S. should use to promote democracy?

Mexico by George Grayson

Mexico's border with Central America, as well as the border it shares with the U.S., has been a pathway for people, goods, crime and contraband in both directions. How can Mexico address these transborder challenges? What is the future of Mexico's relations with its northern and southern neighbors? How will Mexico's foreign relations affect its domestic politics?

Cybersecurity by Ronald Deibert

The securitization of cyberspace has caused a sea change for both governments and the private sector, faced with new threats, new battlegrounds and new opportunities. Faced with challenges such as international cybercrime and authoritarian control of networks, how will the U.S. and its democratic allies approach the cyber frontier? How does this new domain figure in U.S. strategic interests?

Exit from Afghanistan and Iraq by Michael E. O'Hanlon

Ten years after September 11, 2001, the U.S. is winding down its military commitment in Iraq and slowly pulling out of Afghanistan. What exit strategy will help Afghanistan and Iraq build stable democratic nations? How can the U.S. continue to achieve its counterterrorism goals? What is the role of the U.S. in the future of the Middle East?

State of the oceans by Sara Tjossem

The world's oceans are essential to life on earth, and are tremendously sensitive to global climate change. What are the consequences of climate change on oceanic factors like biodiversity, sea levels and extreme weather systems? How can the U.S. and its international partners address the emerging challenges to this shared resource?

Indonesia by James Castle

Having emerged from authoritarianism in the last 15 years, Indonesia has made remarkable strides politically, economically and socially. Yet the new, democratic Indonesia is still a developing country facing considerable challenges. How can Indonesia continue its path of growth, reform and prosperity? What is Indonesia's role in the global community?

Energy geopolitics by William Sweet

The energy markets have been shaken by the instability of Middle East oil and the vulnerability of nuclear power. Moreover, developing countries like China are becoming bigger energy consumers, while energy producers like Russia see the opportunity to widen their influence. In this changed landscape, how will the U.S.'s energy needs affect its relations with other nations?

Montgomery County League Presented Two Public Programs; Provided Information on Website before Board Participated in Education Study Consensus



Board members discuss Education Study (from left) Mary Houska, Janet Hahn, David Schiem, June Schmidt, Elaine Head, Darlene Allen, Joan Zajac, Harriett Cooper, and Judy Snoke. Wayne Worner and Mary Ann H. Johnson also participated.

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County presented an informational and discussion program on Sept. 22 and a panel discussion on Nov. 9, on the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education financing and Equity.

Summary of panel members statements:

Richard Salmon, Emeritus professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Virginia Tech, spoke to issues of structural inequality in the funding of education in Virginia. He predicts that the Commonwealth's support of education in low-income areas of Virginia will decline in the next year.

Brenda Blackburn, Superintendent, Montgomery County Schools, highlighted the historical role of the Federal Government in education and discussed the role of the schools in meeting the needs of preschool children with special needs.

Sheila Tucker, Director New River Community Action Head Start, gave an impassioned description of the Headstart program and its comprehensive services medical, social, and educational services to children and families. Headstart is unfortunately only able to serve 30 percent of the eligible population in the district.

Kenna Colley, Special Education, Radford University School of Teacher Education and Leadership, who trains prospective Special Education teachers, spoke of new trends in the field which are broader in scope and more inclusive.

The consensus meeting was held Nov. 15. The national Education Study is broad in scope and includes the following areas under the role of the federal government in public education (preK through grade 12): the common core standards and assessments which are required for many federal grant programs but are State based, not federal. After much reading and thoughtful discussion, our League has made the following

responses to the study questions posed by the League of Women Voters of the United States:

We strongly agree that a quality public education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy and that the first responsibility of the Federal Government is to ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education. We are concerned that the role of the Federal Government is too small.

We support a national curriculum aligned to national standards and assessments which should provide information to students, parents, teachers and school districts about student achievement and provide comparison data showing progress toward reaching Common Core Standards. Such data should be "criterion referenced" and clearly informative so that teachers, parents, and students know how individual students have mastered criteria established at a national level. It should inform districts how their population compares to others similar to theirs.

We recommend that all federal funding be awarded on a non-competitive basis for all applicants meeting need requirements based on the idea of "common good" and should remain targeted toward poverty and special needs. We believe that federal mandates should be fully funded.

We strongly agree that the federal government has a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to age 5 for all children and that federal support for early childhood education programs (e.g. Head Start, Title I, Special Education, Early Start) should include funding for parent education and support regarding child development, child health and nutrition, and access to other supportive services, such as mental health as needed.

The report of the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County consensus process has been submitted to the League of Women Voters of the United States to be reviewed and tallied. We hope to receive word of our national consensus by 2012. It will form the basis for future League action initiatives.

LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS®
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Calendar

Jan. 3, 11:45 a.m. First Tuesday luncheon, 622 North Main, Blacksburg
Jan. 10, LWVMC Board Meeting, Community Room, Public Library, Blacksburg
Starting Wednesday, Jan. 18 and continuing Wednesdays, Jan. 25, Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, and March 7,
Great Decisions, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Community Room, Public Library, Blacksburg
Feb. 7, 11:45 a.m., First Tuesday luncheon, 622 North Main, Blacksburg
Feb. 14, LWVMC Board Meeting, Community Room, Public Library, Blacksburg Board meeting.

Bulletin sponsors

Companion Animal Clinic (540) 552-6800
Education Programs & Services LLC, Wayne “Dempsey” Worner - (540) 552-8807

JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TODAY

Become a member of the League of Women Voters. 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. Mail to: Betty Williams, Membership Chair, 607 Progress St., Blacksburg, VA 24060, or call 552-2357, or email Alison Wilson at alisonwilson@verizon.net