

2010 – 2011 - The LWV MC Year in Review

The League at all levels has shifted to becoming more aggressive public policy advocates. For the U. S. League those issues have been health care reform and, most recently, safeguarding the Environmental Protection Agency. For the Virginia League, non-partisan redistricting and verified voting have been the important policy issues.

This year, we became activists in a very important local issue, violations of state code and State Board of Elections [SBE] procedures by the Registrar for Elections and the Electoral Board in the last four elections in Montgomery County. We agree with the Attorney General's office that these code violations and mistakes were not deliberate. However, the cornerstone of democracy is the faith that elections are run and tallied correctly according to code and SBE procedures. In our efforts to bring responsibility back to our County's election processes this year, we wrote an Op-Ed in the Roanoke Times, communicated several times with the SBE, attended and spoke at a SBE meeting on Montgomery County, attended County Electoral Board meetings, communicated with Assistant Attorney General Joshua Lief, and were interviewed by the TV and newspaper press. Behind the scenes, much effort was devoted to learning elections code and procedures, ascertaining precisely what had happened, talking with principals and doing research to respond to rumors. So far, the outcome is disappointing. However, we have made many Montgomery County citizens aware of the problems; we have a large number of quiet supporters out there. People have learned that we are a vibrant, energetic organization.

This year started off discouragingly. We could not persuade Congressman Rick Boucher to take part in a Candidate Forum with Delegate Morgan Griffith. Griffith and Boucher did reply to our Voter Guide questions and those replies were put on our web site and hard copies were distributed around the County.

We (mostly Mary Ann Johnson) launched a LWV MC Facebook page. The US LWV realizes we must attract younger members and that means 21st century communications. Carol Lindstrom has created what I think is by far the best LWV web site in Virginia. Facebook was the necessary next step.

We hosted a breakfast with the Blacksburg Town Council in November. We presented a Forum on Health Care Policy in April organized by Amy Mauldon. By the way, our web site archives videos of our programs so you can watch them at any time. Before elections, videos of our Candidate Forums are available on our web site. They are also shown on WTOB, if the candidates represent Blacksburg citizens. Participation in our Great Decisions program grew to 55 people this year, thanks to the efforts of Jane Sprague and Nancy Warren.

We had two member meetings this year: Virginia League Program Planning in January and Consensus with the Virginia League Elections Study in March. We helped sponsor an exhibit, "Leading Ladies of Montgomery County: Unlocking Doors into a Man's World" at the Montgomery Museum. One of the featured leading ladies was long-term member, Lucy Lee Lancaster.

Our major achievement this year, however, was the outstanding job we all did in hosting the Virginia League 2011 Convention April 30 and May 1. Nancy Warren did a masterful job as our local arranger. A third of our members participated in some way in preparations for the Convention and they did so with enthusiasm and professionalism. From Jane Sprague's spectacular flowers, to Meghan Dorsett and Carol Lindstrom's videography to David Scheim and Lucy Goldberg's entertainment at the banquet to every responsibility our members had volunteered to do, they all demonstrated that we are special. Carol has posted the Convention's Redistricting Panel on our web site [www.lwvmcva.org]. I

especially call your attention to Christian Trejbal's talk, which was superb, and to a comment made by Vivian Paige of the South Hampton Rhodes LWV.

WE ARE SPECIAL!

Mary Houska, President, LWVMC