

## 2020 LWVUS Convention

### Thursday, June 25

Virginia Kase, president of LWVUS, introduced a panel discussion that focused on (1) How to ensure fair voting maps; (2) Should Washington, D.C. be a state? (3) How to expand the vote during COVID?

Muriel Bowser, mayor of Washington, D.C. spoke about the possibility of statehood for D.C. She highlighted that the population of D.C. is greater than that of Vermont or Montana, yet D.C. has no representation. The vote on D.C. statehood passed the House of Representatives on Friday, but will likely fail in the Senate. Ms. Bowser suggested that the idea of electing 2 additional Democrat senators from D.C. (with its high minority population) was why the Senate was reluctant to endorse statehood.

The panel suggested a couple of presentations that league members might appreciate:

- The movie “Iron Jaw Angels”
- A PBS special, “The Vote” (this week on PBS in Chicago)

### Friday, June 26

The discussion began, focusing on promoting safety and fairness in the upcoming election in November. The topics included mail in ballots, education of the voting public, equal access to polling places, and safety and security of the election. Other issues included recruiting more election judges and recruiting attorneys to serve in the event of election problems.

Other topics of interest that the League is considering as issues of importance are:

- Climate change
- UN Observer Corps (a world-wide promotion of women in leadership)
- National Popular Vote Bill
- Extending the time line for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment
- Importance of the Census
- Redistricting/Fair maps
- Money in politics
- Constitutional Convention (the League is opposed to states’ holding Con Cons)
- Voter protection amid COVID
- Increased diversity in membership

Valerie Jarrett spoke at length of her rise from an assistant to Chicago Mayor Harold Washington to her work with the Obama administration. She endorsed two important movements: “When We All Vote” and “United States of Women.” These can be found on-line, as well as the educational voting web site: [vote411.org](http://vote411.org)

TV news anchor Norah O’Dp mell provided brief remarks congratulating the LWV for its Centennial and thanking the league for its work over the years to ensure voting rights for all.

We voted on some by-laws issues:

- I voted in favor of students being offered a half price membership cost (though there was a valid objection that by offering the discount only to students, we were excluding those who are not students, also that some leagues have members as young as 14, and the by-law was for those 16 and older). The argument was made that we should market to young people, because studies show that people who vote when they are young tend to vote more consistently as they get older.
- I voted in favor of the League's concerns about public land use. Discussion did include comments about how those federal lands would be used: energy acquisition? cattle? farming?
- I voted against a by-laws change that would have censured LWV board members who behave or speak inappropriately at board meetings. The by-law passed. It states that anyone who is censured would have to undergo a kind of intervention by board members in order to be reinstated.

### Saturday, June 27, 2020

The day kicked off with **LWV President Virginia Kase** making strong statements about

- The difference between being non-partisan and engaging in valid civil discourse about injustice and malfeasance. If we see threats to our democracy, we should step up and call out those who are guilty.
- Restricting access to the ballot box, especially to minorities, should be rejected. She pointed out that in today's political climate, it seems that one side of the political divide seems to be in favor of restricting and limiting voting rights.
- The League's non-partisanship. However, the league should not be afraid to stand up to threats to democracy.
- Racism. She spoke of her two black sons and how they have been pulled over by police even though they were doing nothing wrong. She stressed that LWV should take a strong stand against injustice.

Virginia's remarks will be on YouTube after the convention.

The **Treasurer, Jessica Lowe**, outlined the budget. She talked about the decreases in revenue because of the coronavirus (fewer donors, fewer fund-raising opportunities). There were additional expenses, as well, with some new employees to deal with technology, distance meetings and new software dealing with the *Making Democracy Work* program.

Some highlights:

- Foundation income is up, but individual giving and licensing incomes are down.
- Expenses are up because of digital software (vote411.org)
- PMP will not increase. (We voted to approve the \$32 PMP rate for 2020- 2022.)
- Bottom line: financial health is strong; there are excess reserves that can cover proposed deficits.

### Videos during breaks

Videos of a number of people congratulated and thanked the League for its good work over the years: Senator Amy Klobuchar (MN), Congressperson Dean Phillips (MN), Congressperson Don Beyer (VA), Senator Jack Reed (RI), Sheryl Sandberg (CEO Facebook), Congressperson Ben Cooper (TN). Senator Doug Jones (AL), Congressperson Grace May (NY), Congressperson Al Lawson (FL), Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY),

Congresswoman Brenda Wallace (GA), Senator Mike Rounds (SD), Congressperson Nanette Barragan (CA), Congressperson James Raskin (MD), Congressperson Terri Sewell (AL), Congressperson James Clyburn (SC), Congressperson Lucy McBath (GA), Congressperson Henry Cueller (TX), Congressperson Anna Eshoo (CA), Senator John Boozman (AR), Congressperson Adam Schiff (CA), Senator Mike Enzi (WY, Congressperson Juan Vargas (CA)), Congressperson Joe Kennedy (MA), Congressperson Chellie Pingree (ME), Congressperson Donald Payne, Jr. (NJ), Congressperson Kweisi Mfume (MD), Congressperson Jerry McNerney (CA), Congressperson Elise Stefanik (NY), Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), Senator Mark Warner (VA).

Chris Carson recapped program planning:

- A. First, adopt the abolition of the electoral college by *constitutional amendment* as a focus for LWVUS 2020-2022. Joyce Williams of Illinois spoke on behalf of this motion. The Electoral College discourages voters, was started to promote slave holding states. It's time to get rid of it.

Speaking against was a suggestion to instead support the *National Popular Vote Bill* that has already been promoted by 16 states with a total of 196 votes; only 74 additional votes are needed. This bill would probably happen before a Constitutional Amendment could happen.

I voted against, because I think the National Popular Vote bill will be a better way to change our voting system in the US. The vote was in favor of the initiative.

- B. Second, *Transfer of Federal Public Lands* -- move to concurrence. Then debate continued.

Pro: States don't have the financial resources to monitor and support vast areas, so the federal government must provide funding. Federal Public lands should benefit all Americans so the land must stay in federal hands. By keeping the lands in federal hands, corruption with private parties can be reduced. This initiative is in line with LWV support of environmental issues.

Con: The League should concentrate on its core issue of voting rather than taking on other causes, even though this is an important issue. The League's mission can be misunderstood if it takes on too many extraneous causes. The position does not thoroughly support public lands for the use of all. Localities cannot tax federal lands, and Western states get more money because they have more protected lands. So it might be easier for states to tax the land if it were transferred to private entities. It should be a local issue.

I voted against, because I believe that the League should narrow its focus. The vote was in favor of the initiative.

- C. Third, a motion that the League should support voting initiatives at all levels of government. I voted in favor of this. The motion carried.
- D. Fourth, a motion to retain all previous LWVUS positions (in areas of representative government, international relations, natural resources and social policy). I voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.
- E. Fifth, a motion to continue to promote LWVUS program initiatives for 2020-2022 (Campaign for Making Democracy Work, fair electoral system, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics, Redistricting,

Climate Change, ERA, Health Care, Gun Safety, Immigration). I voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

Resolutions voting (asking delegates to support the LWVUS resolutions):

- A. Immigration reform --- All speakers supported the motion. I voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.
- B. Sustainable environment/climate, based on science --- All speakers supported the motion. I voted in favor. The motion carried.
- C. Against systemic racism in law enforcement and at every level of government --- Some speakers opposed this motion, saying that it duplicated other initiatives of the League. I voted in favor of the motion. The motion carried.

These two issues were not presented, because they did not follow the criteria for submitting them.

- A. Abolition of electoral college
- B. Medicare for all

Awards (no acceptance speeches)

- 1. *Building Equitable Partnerships* --- leveraging with other entities, e.g., minority groups, school groups, diverse populations to work for redistricting equity. Winner: LWV of Southern Monmouth County, NJ
- 2. *Storytelling* --- stories about LWV history, e.g., partnerships with schools, League members writing newspaper articles about League work, videos in different languages to encourage the census. Winner: LWV of New York (NY)
- 3. *Strengthening Democracy* (Local League chapter) --- strengthening voter rights and registration; virtual candidate forums, educating formerly incarcerated persons. Winner: LWV of Oakland (CA)
- 4. *Strengthening Democracy* (State League) --- strengthening voter rights and registration; videos about judicial candidates, survey and evaluation of early voting, information about advocacy for fair districting. Winner: LWV of New York

### **Closing:**

Speech by new board president, Dr. Deborah Turner from Omaha, but born in Mason City, IA. She talked about the importance of voting in ALL elections, especially local ones, and using the web site [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) to acquire information. She also advocated for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and talked about structural racism. She admitted that the topic of racism may not technically be in our space to lead, but she argued that this is the time to work for racial justice and to encourage minority participation in elections and in public offices. She closed by talking about intergenerational cooperation. This will help with new technology from younger members, but will also support the history and expertise of older members.