

The DC Voter

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA • JANUARY 2015 • VOLUME 91, ISSUE 01

Consensus Meetings in January

Members who participated in our November educational meetings on DC Electoral processes participated in lively discussions that no doubt will continue at the second round of three meetings in January. That's when Leaguers will decide what, if any, positions LWVDC wants to take on: 1) plurality versus majority election systems, 2) Instant Runoffs or Subsequent Election runoffs, and 3) open versus closed primary elections.

The League develops its positions by "consensus," which, for electoral processes, will be based on discussions at the January meetings. Study leaders will present the conclusions to the Board for adoption.

If you cannot come to one of the meetings, remember your views are important – and they can be expressed by email or letter to our office. January 24th is the deadline for this submission. For those of you who may have to miss the consensus meetings, we are still interested in your views on the subjects we will discuss in person. Your input can help us gauge the strength of consensus. Our positions are much stronger if we can say that a high percentage of our members participated in the development of our position.

The Study Guide for the Elections Process Study were mailed to members in early November. Consensus Questions will be mailed out in late December. Copies are also available on-line at www.lwvdc.org. Please remember to bring your copy of the Guide and Questions to the Consensus Meetings.

January Consensus Meetings

Thursday, January 15th at 7:15 pm near Tenley Metro. On street parking is available. Please contact Kathryn Ray at kcrdlb@gmail.com to RSVP and get directions.

Saturday, January 17th in the office of LWVDC near Farragut West and McPherson Square Metros. Paid parking is available in the garage across the street on 15th. lwvdc1920@gmail.com to RSVP.

Wednesday, January, 21st at 9:45 am in upper Northwest. On street parking is available. Location is not metro accessible. Please contact Marie Richardson at 202-829-3721 or lwvdc1920@gmail.com to RSVP and get directions.

CALENDAR

Wednesday, Jan 7th LWVDC
Board Meeting.
9:45 am

Tuesday, January 13th
New Citizen Voter
Registration. 10 am - 12 pm.
US District Courthouse, 300
Constitution Ave, NW.

Thursday, January 15th
Consensus Meeting on the
Elections Process Study at 7:15 pm
near Tenley Metro. See article on
page one for details.

Saturday, January 17th
Consensus Meeting on the
Elections Process Study at 9:45 am
in upper Northwest. See article on
page one for details.

Wednesday, January, 21st
Consensus Meeting on the
Elections Process Study at 10 am.
See article on page one for details.

Wednesday, Feb 4th
LWVDC Board Meeting.
9:45 am

Saturday, Feb 7th
Local Program Planning Meeting,
10 am - 12:30 pm in the Conference
Room, LWVDC Office. 1100 15th
Street, NW. 11th Floor.

Tuesday, February 10th
New Citizen Voter
Registration. 10 am - 12 pm.
US District Courthouse, 300
Constitution Ave, NW.

A Message from the President, LWVDC



*Barbara Yeomans, President
League of Women Voters
of the District of Columbia*

I hope your holidays brought you together safely with friends and family.

Coming up in 2015 are very important meetings of the membership. This Newsletter's calendar identifies them, and they will be emailed in our *Member Updates*.

In January, we will seek consensus on a position resulting from our Electoral Systems Study ably conducted by Abigail Nichols and Linda Beebe. See the Calendar for dates of these consensus meetings.

In February, we will meet to decide on the local program for 2015-2017. Remember – we conduct National and Local Program Planning on alternating biennial cycles. LWVDC's local positions are set forth in our publication, *Where We Stand*, which is posted on our website. The local program planning meeting provides an opportunity to take stock as well as to consider possible new or expanded efforts. As an example of the latter, one proposal is to look at the electoral system going beyond primaries to focus on other aspects of how a candidate gets on the ballot. Another expected proposal relates to our Statehood position, which was adopted about 20 years ago. This issue of *The DC Voter* has an article on the subject by Anne Anderson and Elinor Hart. Be sure, also, to see the article about Local Program Planning.

Barbara Yeomans

Publication Note: *The DC Voter* is the publication of The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia celebrating its 91st year. We publish bi-monthly in odd numbered months. In recognition of this, we have revised our issue numbering system in this issue to reflect that six issues are published each year.

The DC Voter

The DC Voter is a newsletter of
The League of Women Voters of the
District of Columbia.

Founded in 1920.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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Join us for our Local Program Planning Meeting on Saturday, February 7th

Program planning is the vehicle by which Leaguers agree to the positions on political and social issues that enable our grass roots organization to perform its essential work. As we always do on a biannual basis, in February, we will review our local positions to find those we want to maintain and those we want to change or delete. We also will consider possible studies that could lead to consensus on new positions.

Program Planning is the opportunity for each member to participate in the discussion of ideas for new studies and updates on current positions or education projects.

The importance of this meeting cannot be overemphasized. It establishes the basis for League advocacy and education efforts. When a League representative speaks before the Board of Education, City Council, or other official bodies, that opinion is based on positions created through the program planning process.

To prepare for this important meeting, please review “Where We Stand,” which is available on the LWVDC web site, if you don’t have a copy of your own. Think of positions you recommend be updated or new ones for possible adoption. One issue to be discussed will be revision of the League position on DC Statehood., as explained in the article on page four by Anne Anderson and Elinor Hart.

Consensus is the Key

The technique we use for reaching member agreement is consensus, defined as the “collective opinion of a substantial number of League members, representative of the membership as a whole, after objective study of an issue.” Consensus is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather, it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions, whether in a meeting of the full membership or a series of smaller discussion meetings. Consensus will be the method used at our February program planning discussions. Consensus similarly is the method to be used in the January meetings on the Elections Process.

LWVDC’s Local Program Planning Meeting

Saturday, Feb 7th

10 am - 12:30 pm

Where: Conference Room, LWVDC Office. 1100 15th Street, NW. 11th Floor.

Metro: McPherson Square (Blue/Orange) 2 blocks south; Farragut North (Red) 3 blocks west

Parking: on-street parking & paid garage parking is available in building opposite the League office, 1125 15th Street, NW.

Coffee & Tea will be provided.

Good programs result from careful consideration of our mission and what our members want to accomplish. Our program for 2015-2017 will determine the League’s image in the community. Your participation will help develop the best program for the League and for our community.

A Proposal for Local Program 2015-2017

League Position on DC Statehood Should Be Revised

By Anne Anderson and Elinor Hart

League's current position on DC statehood:

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia supports self-government and full voting representation in Congress for the District of Columbia, and accepts statehood as a means of achieving this goal. This position acknowledges that many serious concerns, including the economic and fiscal resources of the proposed state and the federal enclave, need to be resolved in order to make statehood a viable concept.

This position needs to be revised for two reasons. It fails to recognize statehood as the remedy that ends both Congressional interference in our local/state government and the denial of our voting representation in Congress. The position also indicates that statehood is not viable for economic and fiscal reasons; the statements below by Ed Lazere and Alice Rivlin, two authorities on DC finances, make clear that the opposite is true. We therefore propose that the League replace its current position with the revision that follows.

The League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia advocates for self-government without Congressional interference and for full voting representation in Congress for the District of Columbia, and recognizes statehood as a means of achieving these goals.

Ed Lazere, Executive Director, DC Fiscal Policy Institute:

The District already manages its own finances very well, and becoming a state would not change things much, if at all. The only possible financial responsibilities we might have to newly take on are the courts and a felony prison. But, on the other hand, the new state would likely gain some ability to tax income earned here by non-residents. In any case, the District is well-positioned financially to continue handling its state-level responsibilities --and any new ones -- if it were to gain statehood.

Testimony of Alice Rivlin before the Senate Committee of Homeland Security and Government Affairs on September 15, 2014:

Twenty years ago, one could have raised legitimate doubts about the fiscal wisdom of statehood for the District. Since then, both the city's economy and its fiscal health have continued to improve remarkably. The long decline in population finally turned around. Last year DC population grew faster than that of any state except North Dakota. The city weathered the Great Recession far better than most cities. It has balanced its budget every year for 17 years, built up a substantial balance in the general fund, and enjoyed high bond ratings. There is no longer any reason to worry that the District would not be a fiscally viable state....Mr. Chairman, I commend the Committee for holding this hearing and urge Congress to enact statehood for the District of Columbia.

Dr. Rivlin is a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and Visiting Professor at Georgetown University; also former director of the White House Office of Management and Budget and Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve System.

LWVUS National Program for 2014-2016 Update

In June 2014, at our national convention in Dallas, delegates approved a comprehensive three-part program combining study and review of key, specific structures of American democracy, consisting of:

1. A study of the process of amending the U.S. Constitution, including constitutional conventions;
2. A review and update of the League position on campaign finance in light of forty years of change since the Watergate reforms, in order to enhance member understanding of the new schemes and structures used to influence elections and erode protections against corruption in our political process, and to review possible

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LWVDC Membership Form

JOIN US!

Member Name

2nd Member Name for Household Membership

Name of School for Student Rate

Street Address

City

State

Zip Code

Telephone

Email address

Interests

Please complete this form and send with a check made payable to LWVDC to:

League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia
1100 15th Street NW, 11th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

WHO CAN JOIN?

The League of Women Voters is open to all men and women who are 18 or older and are citizens.

WHAT DO I GET?

You automatically become a member of LWV of the District of Columbia as well as the National Capital Area Inter-League Organization and LWV of the United States.

You will receive full membership benefits for the year and receive the LWVDC newsletter, DC Vote, published six times a year.

You will have the knowledge that you are adding your voice to a powerful force of members from all 50 states, Washington DC, the Virgin Islands, and Hong Kong.

Annual Dues

☐ **Individual: \$45**

☐ **Household: \$67.50**

☐ **Full-time Student: \$30**

LWVUS National Program Update, ctd.

responses to counter them in the current environment of rapid change; and

3. A review of the redistricting process for the U.S. Congress, through the existing redistricting task force, for the purpose of developing action steps.

Three committees have been selected to collect and disseminate information on redistricting in the various states, money in politics and the process of amending the Constitution. As those committees go about their work, LWVUS is encouraging local chapters to inform themselves and their communities about these essential topics. Reading lists will be available shortly.

This is also a good time to consider what reforms are needed in our local community. The key structures of democracy operate at all levels of democracy and reform is needed everywhere, not just at the federal level. A committee could start gathering information about the District's redistricting laws, its laws governing campaign contributions and lobbying expenses as well as laws governing open government. This is also a good time to begin to identify scholars and pundits to work with the League in developing forums for community education.

Any members interested in forming a study committee to help prepare the membership to address the material coming from the national study committees next year should contact the office at lwvdc1920@gmail.com.

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The DC Voter

*Join Us for our
January Consensus Meetings &
February Program Planning Meeting*

Our Mission

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