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League of Women Voters of the Huntington Area

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LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF THE HUNTINGTON AREA

January 2022 E-mail Bulletin

Martha Woodward, 1st VP, woodward@marshall.edu
Wendy Thomas, 2nd VP, wxtomas@frontier.com



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BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE – BEFORE MARCH 2

MARCIA DAoust



LWV members need to speak up now! Our concerns need to be shared with the WV Legislature before “Cross Over Day” at the Legislature, which is March 2, 2022. This is the day after which the only bills considered will be legislation sent from the other chamber of the Legislature. Legislators have advised the LWV that our WV legislators actually DO pay attention to citizens’ comments, even when they come from West Virginians living outside of their district.

Here are tips on “how to be most effective.”

- Call legislators: According to WV legislators, the most effective action that we can take is to personally CALL the individual legislators at the state capitol. (To be prepared for your call, read some articles about the bill, and review the actual language of the bill yourself, through WVlegislature.gov. You may not be able to

reach the legislator and will have to just leave your message. Even if it is just a phone message, legislators tell us that these calls carry tremendous “clout.”)

- Call the leadership: It is important to call the ranking chairperson and minority chair of whichever committee is reviewing the bill. It will not matter that you are not from their district.
- E-mails: If phone calls are not an option, then send your own, personalized e-mail to legislators. Avoid sending standardized form messages.

However you can do it, please be an active advocate for those issues important to you and our community.

Proposed WV Legislation Impacting Elections and Voting

MARCIA DAoust



On Feb. 19, 2022 the LWV of WV conducted an excellent forum on Democracy and Social Justice Bills before the WV Legislature. Fortunately, it was recorded and the Video, and updated/new materials. It can now be found at the website: <https://lwvww.org/?p=2132>

Here is an excerpt of some of the important proposed Election/Voting legislation, as discussed by LWV State Board member, Judy Ball. We hope you can find the time to watch her presentation which contains much more good information. There are many bills to consider, some good, some terrible.

GOOD BILLS ADDRESSING LWV-DESIRED REFORMS:

No-excuse Absentee Voting:

Legislation allowing no-excuse absentee voting can make a big difference in voter participation, as proven by the historic turnout in the 2020 primary election. However, this process cannot be repeated without Legislative action. The current absentee voting eligibility law is too complicated for voters and county clerks. With WV’s rural nature, transportation deficits, and demographics, our state would benefit greatly. There is no evidence that voting by mail benefits the “wrong party” and it is just as secure. Some

contend it may be even more secure. It has the potential to save taxpayers money. The Pandemic is not over.

No-excuse Absentee Bills pending in the Judiciary Committee:

• **HB 4468** – Permits all registered voters to vote absentee, simplifies methods to reduce administrative burden on county clerks, simplifies procedures for implementation in 2022. Other similar bills are: **SB 200** – Similar to HB 2814 from the 2021 session. **SB 240** – Straightforward but incomplete. **HB 2928** – Simple and straightforward but incomplete (similar to SB 240).

Election-day voter registration:

* **HB 2625** This bill permits election-day registration, but lacks the option of electronic registration.

Bills to increase transparency of campaign finance:

• **SB 54:** Requires PACs disclose contributors' name and addresses to Secy of State
• **SB 107:** Requires certain disclosures of election expenditures. • **HB 2841:** Campaign Finance Reform. • **HB 4097:** Prohibits non-public funding sources for election administration, without prior approval by State Election Commission.

Redistricting – several bills pending, plus 2 Constitutional Amendments:

• **SB 253** – Designates Secy. Of State as WV liaison to Census Bureau. Requires county commissions to submit precinct updates to SOS. **HB 2549, HJR 27, HJR 5** – Creates Independent Redistricting Commission, trying to take the politics out of redistricting. **HB 4099** - Increases transparency in apportionment process for congressional and legislative districts.

Restoration of the right to vote: HB 2864, HB 4543, SB 488: Restores the eligibility to vote after a period of incarceration is over. Removes probation, parole ineligibility.

Combining elections: * SB 125, HB 2602, HB 4353: The goal of these bills is to align local/special elections with statewide elections in order to increase voter turnout and save taxpayer money.

BAD BILLS, WHICH COULD DAMAGE FAIR, EFFICIENT ELECTIONS:

Voter Suppression: • **HB 4407** – Requires photo ID for mail-in ballots. • **HB 2607** – Requires photo ID to vote. • **HB 2921** – Changes absentee voting eligibility. • **SB 34** – More stringent residency requirements for voting.

Regressive election procedures: • **HB 3233** – Prohibits electronic ballots. • **HB 4438** - Prohibits voting machines from being networked. • **HB 4293** – Prohibits mailing of absentee application without voter request, which is the process that worked well in the WV 2020 primary.!

WV Water – Bills to Watch

NYOKA BAKER CHAPMAN



[SB 480](#) A bill that would impose an annual fee for well permits and provide an increased number of inspectors to the DEP Office of Oil and Gas is moving toward passage. There currently are only 9 inspectors overseeing approximately 75,000 wells and 28,000 tanks across the state according to WV Rivers. This is definitely a bill to support.

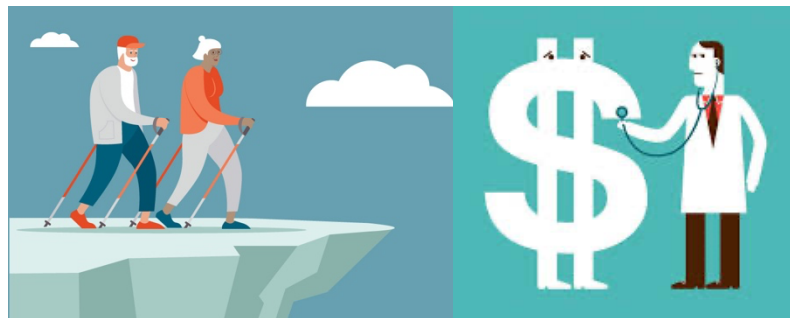
HB 2598 is a horrible bill that would redefine what qualifies as an above ground storage tank and modify their inspection requirements. [Bill Status - Complete Bill History \(wvlegislature.gov\)](#) Here is an excellent example of above ground storage tanks near a water source and why this bill is of great concern. [WSAZ Investigates | Officials refuse to answer questions about cancer-causing chemicals](#)

[WV House changes bill to weaken oversight of oil and gas tanks closest to public water intakes | Legislative Session | wvgazette.com](#)

You can get updates on legislation that affect our water from our trusted coalition partner WV Rivers at [wvrivers.org](#)

Health Care

BETTY BARRETT



The so-called “Medicaid Cliff” describes what happens when a Medicaid recipient’s income goes the least bit over the allowable earnings. I had a secretary many years ago who turned down a raise because she would be paid a few dollars more than her benefits allowed, including Medicaid. She was a single mother with two young children. Her raise would cut off her Medicaid, her subsidized child care, her food stamps, and anything else. She could not afford to make more money – she would lose many times the raise. The Legislature needs to look closely at a bill to prevent this.

HB 3001 was introduced by Evan Worrell, one of our area’s delegates. Borrowed from the West Virginia Citizen’s Action Group newsletter, here is the bill content: [HB 3001](#) creates a Medicaid Buy-in that allows West Virginians to pay a small sliding-scale premium to keep Medicaid or similar coverage and not fall off the “Medicaid cliff” because

their incomes slightly exceed Medicaid eligibility levels. Key legislators need to hear from you. The plan would cover a comprehensive set of benefits and have low deductibles and copays. The state already has the [Medicaid Work Incentive \(M-WIN\)](#) for people with disabilities. Most, if not all, of the cost of this program would be paid for with *federal* dollars using federal options and waivers.

Please let key legislators know all workers need this program.

HB 3001 is:

Pro - Workforce Development - West Virginians can keep working or return to work without fear of losing affordable health insurance coverage

Pro-Financial Independence - West Virginians can accept more hours or a promotion and not drop off the “Medicaid cliff”

Pro-Family - West Virginians can marry without worrying about their new household income pushing them off the “Medicaid cliff”

HB 3001, introduced by Delegate Evan Worrell, has bipartisan support.

More Health Care

Many actions of the legislature are not strictly speaking “health care.” They have an important connection to the health of citizens of West Virginia.

Think about the efforts to reduce inspections of huge tanks containing toxic materials to prevent leakage into water supplies for communities. We saw what can happen with the Kanawha County leak that contaminated the water of 300,000 people a few years ago. Now look at HB 2598, to reduce these inspections, that would benefit owners of businesses that could cause problems. Have we forgotten that disaster?

Look at the efforts to allow more chemical contamination of smaller water supplies from rivers and streams. Look at SB 279, now on the Governor’s desk awaiting his approval, that increases the number of exempted chemicals in our water, for the benefit of polluting businesses.

I could fill up several newsletters with examples. We just need to consider all the unintended consequences and health connections when looking at legislation. A small percentage of bills each year are passed, and we can hope those factors are considered.



Honoring
Kindness,
Brilliance and
Nonviolence

NYOKA BAKER CHAPMAN

From our genetic cradle we are all one people. The evolution of humanity became a matter of changing environments and adaptations. Black History Month gives opportunity to dig deeper into our shared human history. We look to the brightest and best to see the blueprints of how to live a more noble life.

'The United Order of Tents' is the oldest Black women's organization in the United States. Acknowledged as a 'secret society' their work began in 1867 when two formerly enslaved African American women, Annetta M. Lane and Harriet R. Taylor founded the order in Norfolk, VA. They pledged to shelter, nurse and take care of the needy in the African American community. The amazing work of their chapters have continued to make a difference through their dedicated kindness in action.

<http://www.unitedorderoftents.org/heritage/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Order_of_Tents

Race or sex has never been an issue in finding the smartest solutions on any level of thinking whether scientific, technological or philosophical. When American mathematicians Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson were able to mastermind rocketing John Glenn into space and back when others couldn't is proof absolute. Their true story can be seen in the film 'Hidden Figures.' The influence of pioneering minds like that of Pauli Murray on our modern social evolution is a *must know*. You can watch the documentary 'My Name is Pauli Murray' while it is available on Amazon Prime. Recommended (but not light reading) is the NY times bestseller and a National Book Award winner 'Stamped from the Beginning', the Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram X. kendo. Analysis brings understanding.

[Watch Hidden Figures | Prime Video - amazon.com](#)

[Watch My Name is Pauli Murray | Prime Video - Amazon.com.](#)

Dr. Martin Luther King's Principles of Non-violence are still a *go to* for guidance on best practices in a world filled with stressful communications, fear and firearms.

- 1. Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.** It is active nonviolent resistance to evil.
- 2. Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.** The end result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation.
- 3. Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people.** Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims.
- 4. Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform.** Nonviolence willingly accepts the consequences to its acts.
- 5. Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.** Nonviolence resists violence to the spirit as well as the body. Nonviolence love is active, not passive. Nonviolence love does not sink to the level of the hater. Love restores community and resists injustice. Nonviolence recognizes the fact that all life is interrelated.

6. Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice. The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win.

https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/sites/mlk/files/lesson-activities/six_principles_of_nonviolence.pdf

What is future of Black History?

Bills have been introduced in the WV legislature during this session deeming that Legislators are more qualified than Educators to determine curriculums in our schools. Similar bills are now at issue in numerous states due a cultural backlash against accepted liberal arts educational practices that acknowledge diversity, equity and inclusion; and to what some consider to be 'divisive' teaching in the role of racism in American history. If certain bills are passed into law, WV teachers will be forced to censor themselves to meet new state requirements. Will students come to think that if they didn't learn it in school, it isn't true? Will they go to institutions of higher learning only to discover that they have arrived unprepared?

The history of oppression and violence is not owned by white men and the fear that such stereotyping will harm the white identity is not logical. The truth remains that **All peoples** share the burden of barbaric behavior. The trans-Atlantic slave trade to the Americas could not have existed without tribal networks that helped supply slaves to the Portuguese and others engaged in the profit of human trafficking. The need for labor to provide commodities to a growing urbanization that was no longer self-sufficient left the dilemma of greed reigning over moral judgment. Yet, historically almost all civilizations, races, groups, factions and governments have committed unimaginable atrocities that cannot be erased. From religious inquisitions to the Jewish Holocaust, what will be determined as allowable truth to be learned in the classroom?

HB 4011 'Establishing the Anti-Stereotyping Act' has gone to the house judiciary and could then move further for a vote. There seems to be opinion that it has the best chance of the lot for passage. Yet, these bills mark similar language and interpretation. If one fails there is another one that could advance.

[HB 4011 Text \(wvlegislature.gov\)](https://www.wvlegislature.gov/bills/2019/hb4011)

[hb4016 intr.pdf \(wvlegislature.gov\)](https://www.wvlegislature.gov/bills/2019/hb4011) See specific teaching methods legislation places at issue.

[HJR 102 Text \(wv legislature.gov\)](https://www.wvlegislature.gov/bills/2019/hjr102)

[SB 45 Text \(wvlegislature.gov\)](https://www.wvlegislature.gov/bills/2019/sb45) Defining and giving consequences to 'Divisive Acts.'

Particularly cited in HB 4016

<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>

<https://www.newsweek.com/social-emotional-learning-becomes-latest-battleground-school-curriculums-1671698>

State's Rights vs Federal Laws and Mandates

Our senate's inability to pass the [Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act](#) has continued to bring despair. But Voting Rights and Education are now not the only issues on the table that some states want to be able to control.

WV HCJ 31, [HCR 31 Text \(wvlegislature.gov\)](#) reflects WV joining with a collective of states that wish to convene to set limits on the oversight of federal jurisdiction.

WV is also a lead petitioner in a case filed on 4/29/2021 that is set to be heard by the **US Supreme Court on 2/28/22**. The decision reached in [West Virginia v. EPA](#) will affect not only WV but all states. There should be a ruling by summer in the case.

<https://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/west-virginia-v-environmental-protection-agency/>

https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/20/20-1530/176915/20210429133443663_2021.04.29%20-%20West%20Virginia%20v.%20EPA%20Petition.pdf

WV has already divested from banking institutions and mutual funds that have developed policies regarding financing the fossil fuel industry in favor of green energy alternatives. WV's relationship with BlackRock is well defined in an article published by the Institutional Investor.

[West Virginia Treasury Drops BlackRock Over Stance on ...](#)

Putting 'Justice 40' into perspective.

The White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council met for two days on January 26 – 27 with registered participants to discuss the **'Pathway to Justice 40'** by webinar and lectures. People from across the country also registered to comment on environmental justice issues in their states. There were unimaginable stories of how bad things really are.

The esteemed members of the advisory council explained how **40% of Federal funds** for climate change initiatives must address the needs of communities who have suffered the most from living in the wake of damages caused by polluting industries and could also suffer displacement in the creation of new infrastructure and reclamation efforts. There was much content discussed on the importance of DEI compliance in the accomplishment of 'Justice 40' actions. By the time the conclusion of the meeting arrived, Ideas about how to create and publish a 'scoreboard' to determine the success of Justice 40's policies were left hanging in the air. There was acknowledgment to commenters that they would need to navigate the system for relief within their own communities. Their goal was to

collect additional recommendations to the White House to further formalize 'Justice 40' into a workable and traceable reality.

[The Path to Achieving Justice40 | The White House](#)

What we are seeing in WV at this time is that organizations, businesses, corporations and coalitions formed in the private sector are getting it right and managing to check the boxes to qualify for federal money from the American Rescue Plan and the passage of the Infrastructure Reconciliation bill which has already placed **Billions of dollars at the disposal of qualifying applicants**. We can see from what is happening in our own area with Coalfield Development and the ACT Now Coalition, Advantage Valley, activities at the Robert C. Byrd Institute and Reimagine Appalachia to know that change IS happening to secure a greener prosperity into the coming decade. Yet, without climate friendly legislation, meeting a 50% reduction in greenhouse gases by the end of this decade will be difficult to accomplish.

Join or Renew Your Membership



MEMBERSHIP IN THE LEAGUE

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization that neither supports nor opposes candidates or parties. Membership is open to anyone of voting age. Dues are free for full-time students, \$50 for an individual, and \$75 for two persons in a household. Send your check to Patricia Scarr, 16 Nancy Lane, Barboursville, WV 25504.