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Area Bulletin

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League of Women Voters of the Huntington Area

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Voting is my super power!



January 2024 E-mail Bulletin

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Introducing our LWVHA 2024 Legislative Priorities

Nyoka Baker Chapman

Since February 14, 1920, the League of Women Voters has supported priorities that advocate for equal rights at the ballot box and improving the quality of life for children and families. Through the last 100 years these priorities have continued to evolve yet they remain the same. These bipartisan concerns reflect common ground as they impact the security and enrichment of the lives of our citizens. That rhetoric so often seems to overshadow issues is difficult to accept and we find ourselves forced to navigate a political quagmire in an effort to make our state a better place to live.



New legislative priorities appear over the course of time. This year Artificial Intelligence was added as a major concern due to the threats posed to create election interference and the spread of misinformation. AI applications can literally put words into the mouth of a candidate's opponent and use their image to create a virtual reality that has nothing to do with the truth. Turning a lie into a truth with a picture is worth a thousand words and is a reason for WV to cause candidates to check a box when filing for office that they will not use artificial intelligence apps in their campaigns and create penalties for doing so. Potential AI damage may yet arise though from dark money groups manipulating the truth

and bombarding us with non-substantive content that is designed to push buttons that will be difficult if not impossible to stop.

[Six ways that AI could change politics | MIT Technology Review](#)

[Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence | The White House](#)

Losses to our area's local budget for parks and libraries were troubling and realizing that funds do not appear to be available from the state's touted surplus to accommodate such emergencies seemed unbelievable. We need sustainable and predictable funding that could be made available from the state as a failsafe when local budgets for needed operations become unpredictably compromised.

The L WVHA board completed our priorities by consensus which involved a good deal of discussion, time and effort. The priorities have been mailed to the delegates and senators of the Huntington area to both their capital and district addresses. We hope these affirmations will strike a chord and inspire them in their choices to sponsor bills or vote to support them during the 2024 session.

You can view contact information and the committees to which our legislators have been assigned under their listings on the WV Legislature website. Committees of interest, their agendas and meetings are posted over the course of the session. Contacts with our legislators, particularly committee members, by email, calls, letters or fax on bills of concern are important! [2024 Legislative Calendar \(wvlegislature.gov\)](#)

There is power for the people if they take it, and the details can be found in the **Citizens Guide to the Legislative Process**. This is a *must read* as to how citizens can move their ideas into active legislation. <https://www.wvlegislature.gov/Educational/citizens/process.cfm#process7>

L WVHA 2024 Legislative Priorities

Securing the Voice of the People at the Ballot Box/Strengthening Democracy

- Support legislation that will address the threats posed by artificial intelligence to create election interference and the spread of misinformation. Elections must be kept secure, fair and accessible.
- Support voter registration during early voting and on election day.
- Support methods to increase voter turnout.
- Support legislation to modernize election methods, reduce taxpayer costs and reduce administrative burden on our county clerks while preserving election security.
- Support increased transparency in political spending.
- Support legislation to re-enfranchise voters who were formerly incarcerated.
- Support Fair Maps and redistricting without partisan and racial gerrymandering.

Safeguarding Equal Rights/Respecting Diversity

- Support legislative efforts that ensure civil and constitutional rights.
- Support reproductive rights.
- Support legislation that will ensure equality of opportunity in education, employment, healthcare and housing for all West Virginians regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or economic status.

Protecting Children and Families/Meeting the Needs of All WV Citizens

- Support health care for all West Virginians, including expanded Medicaid coverage, subsidies for affordable coverage or sliding scale premiums based on an ability to pay.
- Support state budgets that cover essential human services and protect our most vulnerable.
- Support basic tax-based funding that is adequate, predictable and sustainable.
- Support legislation that protects the health of our citizens and the unborn by creating laws that reduce the risk of exposure to hazardous environments from inadequate oversight and outdated permitting requirements.
- Support for agricultural and community projects that create a greater availability of nutritious foods.

Creating a Sustainable Future/Making WV a Desirable Place to Live

- Support updating water quality standards to strengthen protections for human and wildlife habitats and support measures to expand access to water service that meets these standards.
- Support continuing efforts to clean up legacy pollution from orphaned gas wells and abandoned coalfields.
- Support just transitions for workers in the fossil fuel energy sectors.
- Support legislation that authorizes and promotes community solar projects.
- Support the use of available federal funding to transform the WV communities most affected by poverty and polluting industries.



Join or Renew Your Membership



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 Martha Woodward 86 N. Bradley Foster Dr., Huntington, WV 25701

DEFEND DEMOCRACY

When Benjamin Franklin was asked after a session of the Constitutional Convention, "What kind of a government have you given us?" he replied, "A republic, if you can keep it."

Modern authoritarians/dictators are rising to power worldwide, usually gradually and through consistent patterns. This has happened in India, Turkey, Hungary, Poland, and Nicaragua. If we can recognize it when it is happening, citizens can oppose it.

The League of Women Voters strongly supports democracy as established by our U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights and opposes any threats to it. We encourage all our members and supporters to do the same.



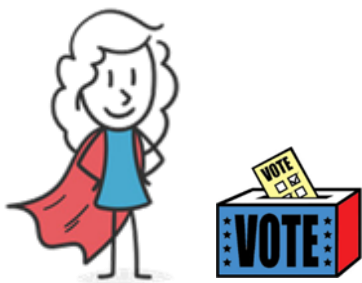
COMMON AUTHORITARIAN ACTIONS:

> Undermine Independent Institutions. Attack the courts. Remove the independence of civil service employees working in law enforcement, central banking, judiciary, official statistics, financial accounting/regulation, election administration, intelligence and national security.

- > Spread falsehoods, rewrite history, and amplify disinformation. Work to weaken freedom of speech, limit the press, public voices and all those opposing the autocratic faction. Autocrats may purchase news media, attack newspapers/reporters, whistleblowers, activists and religious leaders. They undermine belief in truth.
- > Increase power of the executive branch. Destroy checks and balances. Convince the legislative branch to pass laws giving more power to the central leaders, while reducing the authority and power of the legislators and courts.
- > Demonize others and increase division between populations. Blame problems of the country on minority populations, the “other.” Target “Outsiders”, marginalize and attack vulnerable groups. Sow division in society and turn the “many” against a few.
- > Increase Fear & Stoke Violence. Strategically inflame politically-useful violence to increase fear, division and feelings of insecurity. This can offer an excuse for restrictions on civil liberties and the use of force. Decrease political compromise. Take advantage of acts of aggression or disasters to declare an emergency and implement marshal law. Make “in-group” supporters fearful to voice dissent.
- > Corrupt and control elections, meanwhile conducting sham elections. Suppress the vote, tilt rules against opponents, capture the election administrators, control or overturn the results.
- > Amass wealth through corruption.
- > Attack basic rights of free expression, free press, freedom of association, religious freedom and internet freedom.
- > Make citizens feel powerless to resolve problems. Instill belief that solutions come from the top leaders down.

To learn more about dictators and authoritarian tools, see:

- > Websites, for example: ProtectDemocracy.org (USA), FreedomHouse.org (USA) and CommonsLibrary.com (Australia)
- > Books by: Timothy Snyder, Steven Levitsky, Daniel Ziblatt, Ruth Ben-Ghiat and more. There are also many YouTube interviews with these and other authors.



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