

# Prince William Area Members-At-Large Unit

League of Women Voters Virginia

<http://lwv-va.org/pwc.html>

March 2011

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## Field Trip: Lorton Workhouse

At the beginning of the 20th Century, President Theodore Roosevelt commissioned the purchase of a large tract of land in Virginia for the creation of a workhouse for Washington, DC's non-violent criminals. Roosevelt's progressive era vision was to provide prisoners with fresh air, natural light and structured, purposeful work as the basis for their rehabilitation. Agricultural operations began at the Workhouse in 1912 and the prisoners created a brick plant where they produced bricks to construct the permanent buildings that now make up the Workhouse Arts Center. At the same time, the Women's Division of the Workhouse was established west of the Men's Workhouse. The Women's Division is known for having held approximately 168 women, most from the National Women's Party, for picketing in front of the White House for women's voting rights. Lucy Burns, who along with Alice Paul, had founded the National Women's Party, was one of the women incarcerated in the Women's Division of the Workhouse.

The workhouse-style correction facility became a medium security prison, and watch towers, cells and wired fences were installed. By the 1980's, overcrowding had become an issue, and the buildings were in a state of severe disrepair. DC prison officials were ordered to begin prepping for closing after more than 80 years of operation.

In July 2002, Fairfax County received the title to the land that included the former Workhouse. The transfer of the land to the county was made possible through the

Lorton Technical Corrections Act. This act required that the county develop an adaptive re-use plan for the land and the former prison facilities. The Lorton Arts Foundation put forward a plan to transform the former prison facility into a cultural arts center and, in July 2004, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved the rezoning of a 55-acre portion of the former correction's facility to become the Workhouse Arts Center.

As a culminating celebration of Women's History Month, on Sunday, March 27 at 1 p.m., our Unit will visit this important historic site. The League's interest, is of course, rooted in the women's suffragist movement. Since many of our members have never been to the workhouse, this field trip is designed to offer them a unique opportunity.

Carpooling is available. Call Joyce Art at 703-580-8122 to arrange transportation. We hope to see you there!

*Celebrate Women's History Month!  
Visit Lorton Workhouse with us.*

**Sunday, March 27, 1 p.m.  
9601 Ox Road, Lorton**

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**Women have been trained to speak softly  
and carry a lipstick. Those days are over.**

**-Bella Abzug**

Our Unit will hold a consensus meeting this Sunday, March 20, to complete the second part of the League's Election Law study. Our responses will be forwarded to the state League which receives consensus results from Leagues across Virginia. The consensus meetings help the League update the official position on the issues.

The questions considered were:

What measures do you support to facilitate voting at the polls on Election Day?

What is the role of the State to ensure consistency with regard to these measures?

Do you support legislation that would allow the courts to extend the hours that the polls are open in the case of disasters or other emergencies that prevent voters from getting to the polls?

What types of absentee or early voting do you support for all voters in Virginia, i.e., not just military and overseas voters?

Would you support a pilot program of all-mail voting?

Do you believe that increasing turnout and facilitating voting should be equal goals for adopting changes in the way that Virginia conducts elections?

Do you support use of fax machines and e-mail attachments (or similar technology) to return voted absentee ballots from: Military and overseas voters? All absentee voters?

If proven safe and secure by a pilot program or programs, in either Virginia or other states, would you support using the Internet to vote?

Are you satisfied that the current law regarding recounts protects the rights of all/both candidates in close elections?

Do you believe that party identification of candidates on the ballot should be extended to all partisan elections (those, such as constitutional officers and county boards of supervisors, in which candidates are chosen by political parties) in Virginia?

The full text of the questions and study materials can be found on the member's website at

<http://members.lwvva.org/electionstudy.html>.

### *New Members in the News*

National member Carol Koontz renewed her membership through our Unit, and Donna Hairston-Benford, Ethel Chris Lee and Judith Smith joined. Welcome, ladies!

The PWA Unit publication for Prince William area residents, "They Represent You- 2011," is now available.

Thanks to the Prince William Public Library System for updating and printing this edition. We are pleased to announce that the Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative (NOVEC) also contributed to the cost of printing.

Copies will be distributed to all County libraries. Our Unit will be delivering copies to elected officials and community groups. If you would like copies to give out to organizations in your area, please call Jessie Barringer at 703-753-0420.

### **"Gerrymandering: The Movie" a Hit**

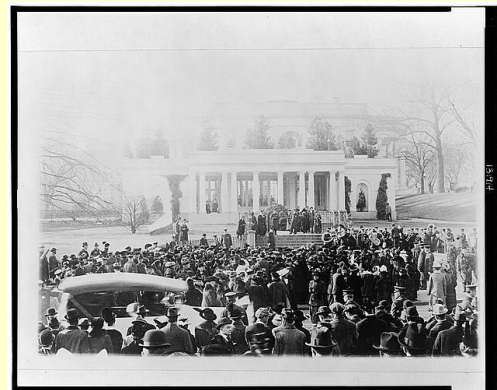
The film "Gerrymandering: The Movie" drew a standing room only crowd at Pohick Library on January 16, raising awareness about the massive upcoming redistricting prospects.

A large contingent of Advanced Placement U.S. government students from Battlefield High School (Haymarket) added to the attentive audience.

Introduced by Dr. Michael McDonald from George Mason University, who also appears in the film, the documentary traces the history of gerrymandering and also weaves in the effort to establish an independent redistricting commission in California. That effort, aided by the League of Women Voters of California, was ultimately approved by voters and offers hope for reform elsewhere.

The showing was sponsored by LWV Fairfax as well as our Unit.

Thank you to all for making this happen and for having our area so well represented.



*Suffragists march on the Whitehouse, leading to the arrest of many.  
Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.*



## Redistricting : Carol Noggle Represents Us in Richmond

On March 11, our own Carol Noggle spoke for the LWV-VA at the Independent Bipartisan Advisory Commission on Redistricting's public hearing in the Capitol Building.

We want to thank Carol for representing us so well. Carol has been our link to Richmond, not only at this event, but through her regular attendance and reporting on the Women's Roundtables.

### **Statement of Carol Noggle, League of Women Voters of Virginia, to the Virginia Independent Bipartisan Advisory Commission on Redistricting Capitol Building, Richmond March 11, 2011**

Good afternoon, Chairman Holsworth and Members of the Commission. I am Carol Noggle of Gainesville. Today I am speaking for the Virginia League of Women Voters. It is very gratifying and encouraging to us that Virginia citizens have this unique historic-making opportunity to expand participation in the redistricting process.

Proper redistricting is basic to the constitutional right of fairness and equal representation for all citizens so this reform pilot project can be the start to overcome deficiencies in Virginia's election process.

Given past instances of non-competitive districts, such as the 2009 election where 30 of 100 House candidates were incumbents with no opposition, and such as instances where incumbents were noticeably protected, through several elections, so that citizens doubted that their votes counted, it has long been known that changes are needed. If all the proposed plans – those produced by Mr. McDonald for the commission, the College competition plans, and those from the General Assembly joint committee — can be presented to the public for comparison, the degree of transparency in government will be greatly increased and result in increased public awareness, confidence in government, and engagement. Just the recent announcement of Mr. McDonald's redistricting plan piqued public interest ... and that of legislators. This interest is the beginning of evidence to dispute the skepticism that this commission cannot influence or improve the end product.

We urge you to display the plans and the rationale of new boundary lines throughout the state as quickly as possible. We urge you to have a vigorous exchange of ideas when you present the plans to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House, the Chairmen of the House and Senate Privileges and Elections Committees, and the Governor.

No doubt you have fully realized the Challenges in Redistricting including, but not limited to, how to identify and preserve communities of interest, how to accommodate special populations that have increased in size, how to keep areas with low population density at a reasonable geographical size, how to shift voters to new districts as needed, how to avoid moving incumbents out of their present districts, how to find ways to alter "safe" districts fairly, and how to alter previously gerrymandered districts.

In my area there is a non-contiguous precinct within a county magisterial district that has a very irregular boundary that can easily be construed as gerrymandering – even more irregular than the original salamander. The precinct is actually divided by part of a neighboring town and a railroad track.

If the bipartisan redistricting commission work results in any one of several benefits such as more competitive races that give voters more options, more candidates to challenge previously unopposed incumbents, a decreased polarization in the legislature and the likelihood of more bipartisan compromise, increased voter turnout, and increased citizen engagement – then success occurred.

When a voter asks the question, "Does My Vote Count?" the answer can be "Yes!"

We also suggest that the commission continue to function throughout this year so that you can analyze together this year's General Assembly races and the results of the November election to look especially for how competitive the races are, and what the level of voter turnout is, in comparison to past years.

If this independent bipartisan advisory commission at the state level is successful it can serve as a model for Virginia counties and cities to follow. This commission's success will also be setting the stage for a bipartisan redistricting commission to serve 10 years from now. The League of Women Voters of Virginia thanks you for your dedication to this task.



# Prince William Area Members-At-Large Unit League of Women Voters of Virginia

[www.lwv-va.org](http://www.lwv-va.org)  
<http://lwv-va.org/pwc.html>

Join and become a Member of the  
League of Women Voters of the Prince William Area.  
Or, renew your membership now!

*Prince William County, Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park*

Membership Application July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012

The LWV is a non-partisan organization which neither supports nor opposes any political party or candidate. The LWV is open to all citizens, female or male, who are 18 years of age or older. The purposes of the LWWVA are to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and to act on selected governmental issues.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code + 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues: \$60.00 single or \$90.00 household (2 persons). Dues include enrollment in the League of Women Voters of Virginia and the League of Women Voters of the United States. **Dues are due by June 30<sup>th</sup> for the coming fiscal year.**

Please make check payable to **Prince William Area MAL LWV VA** and mail to Prince William Area MAL LWWVA, 6010 Wheeler Lane, Broad Run, VA 20137.

Your ideas matter! Please list suggestions for programs and activities that you would find interesting if undertaken by the new League of Women Voters of the Prince William Area.

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