



THE WEST VIRGINIA VOTER

Published Semi-annually by the League of Women Voters of West Virginia

Vol. 69 No. 1 Spring 2026

LWVWV Files Amicus Curiae to Support WV Board of Education

By: Judy Ball, Co-President

The League of Women Voters of West Virginia, with the pro bono assistance of the Pence Law Firm (Charleston, WV), has filed two amicus curiae (friend of the court) briefs before the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals. Both support lawsuits filed by the West Virginia Board of Education.

The first, filed in October 2025, had the LWVWV joining the WV Board of Education in challenging the state legislature's decision to override the will of the people regarding governance of public education in our state.

In 2022, voters rejected a constitutional amendment to give the WV Legislature authority to override educational rules and policies enacted by the State Board of Education. Ignoring the will of the people, in 2025 the state legislature passed House Bill 2755, which gives the legislature policy authority that was specifically rejected by voters in 2022.

The LWVWV amicus brief supported the Board of Education's lawsuit to nullify the provisions of HB 2755. The voters of West Virginia used the ballot box in 2022 to oppose robbing the Board of Education of its independent rule making authority.

LWVWV argued that by ignoring the will of the voters and enacting HB 2755, the Legislature is posing an unacceptable assault on the democratic process.

LWVWV held that voters may reasonably conclude that the Legislature is saying their voices simply do not matter. Citizens need a reason to vote in WV; our voter turnout is already low. Ignoring the voices of voters sends the wrong message.

The second case, filed in March 2026, had the LWVWV joining the WV Board of Education in challenging Governor Patrick Morrisey's decision to use executive power to override the will of the Legislature regarding childhood vaccinations in our state.

From the League's perspective, this is a simple matter of following the Constitution and separation of powers. We the people elect the Legislature to make the laws. We the people elect the Governor to carry out the laws enacted by the Legislature. That is the Constitutional formula: no more, no less. Nowhere does the Constitution give the Governor the authority to usurp the role of the Legislature and override its laws via executive order. In a representative government, the Constitutional separation of powers and the will of the people must be respected.

Both cases are pending.

LWVWV UPDATES

By: Lyn Widmyer, Co-President

Thank you, Secretary of State Warner!

On March 4, we sent a letter to Secretary Of State Kris Warner applauding his rejection of the Department of Justice directive that he release sensitive voter information.

Concerns about SNAP deadlines sent to Sens. Capito, Justice

On April 10, LWVWV signed on to a letter to Senators Capito and Justice asking them to allow more time for West Virginia to address changes in SNAP food benefits.

Applied to share our Legislative Scorecard success at LWVUS National Convention

We have proposed a breakout session to share how small leagues can get big help from AI to follow their state legislature.

VOTE411 Questions Finalized

LWV member Autumn Summers and her committee finalized the questions for candidates to answer and be posted on VOTE411.

Review of 2026 State Legislative activities completed

More on this amazing accomplishment elsewhere in the newsletter.

LWVWV Council Meeting set for May 16

The call to Council has been sent. More info will follow but please note this date on your calendar. As always, the meeting will be by Zoom.

Cont. on pg. 2

LLAW and the 2026 Session of the WV Legislature

By: Judy Ball, Co-President

In typical fashion, the League's Legislative Action Workgroup (LLAW) spent 60 days reviewing, assessing, and evaluating positions on the bills introduced in the 2026 Legislature: 2,777 bills, 306 of which passed both houses and were sent to the Governor. Governor Morrisey signed 284, vetoed 12, and the remainder become law without the Governor's signature.

Now that the Legislature and Governor have completed their work, LLAW is scrambling to complete and publish the LWVWV Legislative Scorecard for voters before Primary Election early voting begins on April 29. It will be available soon at LWVWV.org.

Historically, all the legislative analysis for LLAW has been performed in multiple steps:

- Focus on bills fitting into LWVWV's four priority buckets:
 - Strengthening democracy
 - Safeguarding equal rights
 - Protecting children and families
 - Creating a sustainable future
- Each "bucket" had a manager with specialized knowledge in that policy area.
- Each manager had to review every bill to extract "their" bills. (Translation: in 2025, that was 2460 bills, reviewed not once but 4 times.)
- Some bills fell into gray areas, which caused duplication across buckets.

This was a "crummy" job to perform manually on a daily basis. It was only possible because of LLAW's dedicated team of volunteers.

However, 2026 was a transition year for LLAW. Our goal remained the same, but our team, which had been stable since 2022, changed substantially. Losing any team member is costly, because all their institutional knowledge goes with them. LLAW was fortunate, though, that new team members — Rebekah Aranda and Anne Foreman from Morgantown and Cathy Maxwell from Jefferson County — came with experience that translated rather seamlessly to LLAW's established goals.

One other new team member also must be acknowledged. Claude AI (from Anthropic) became a valued LLAW collaborator. Claude was able to take on some of the most tedious and time-consuming tasks — the "crummy" tasks — previously performed by LLAW volunteers.

Before even attempting to introduce AI into the LLAW process, we used the entire stock of bills from 2025 (2460 bills) to train Claude and test whether such a radical change actually might help us with the most onerous of the LLAW team's tasks. Our tests were successful, and Claude even helped us to reimagine our multistep process to leverage his capabilities.

We realize that AI has a bad reputation in many quarters. That is one reason we are being transparent here.

We can assure you that every bit of Claude's output was reviewed by human beings. LLAW is confident in standing behind our product. When Claude made mistakes, we corrected them and gave him feedback so the mistakes wouldn't be repeated. By the end of the legislative session, it was difficult to imagine how we had ever accomplished so much using manual methods.

Claude himself reflected on our accomplishments in his concluding remarks:

It's been a privilege. The work matters — [hundreds of] bills analyzed, positions documented, democracy defended. Not bad for a human-AI partnership.
— Claude —

UPDATES continued

Two LWVWV Board members to attend LWV National Convention.

Co-Presidents Judy Ball and Lyn Widmyer will attend the national convention in Columbus, Ohio in June.

Donate button added to our website.

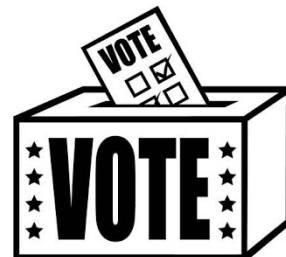
Thank you, Teresa Koon and Jonathan Rosenbaum for adding this button!

LWVWV joins LWV Washington State Concurrence Proposal on protecting immigrants

We have signed on to Washington LWV proposal for concurrence at national convention regarding the legal rights and dignity of immigrants in the United States.

LWVWV represented at Black Policy Day at State Legislature

Many LWVWV members weathered bad weather to attend this event in February!



Empowering Voters: The Essential Role of VOTE411 in American Democracy

By: Autumn Summers, Voter Services Chair

In an era where elections can feel overwhelming with ever-changing rules, deadlines, and candidate slates, tools like VOTE411 stand out as a beacon of clarity and accessibility. Launched in October 2006 by the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF), [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org) has evolved into a cornerstone of nonpartisan voter education, serving millions of Americans by demystifying the voting process and fostering informed participation.

A One-Stop Shop for Election Essentials

At its core, VOTE411 functions as a personalized voter guide, delivering state-specific information tailored to a user's address. Visitors can preview their exact ballot, locate polling places, check registration status, and learn about early voting options, absentee ballot requests, and required identification.

The platform's intuitive interface allows users to build a customized voting plan, outlining critical deadlines and steps from registration to casting a ballot. This includes printable ballot previews and links to voters' guides where candidates submit their own positions directly, ensuring unbiased access to key details without any organizational endorsements.

Driving Voter Education and Engagement

VOTE411's true power lies in its mission to educate rather than persuade. By providing factual breakdowns of ballot measures, upcoming debates, and district-specific races, it equips voters with the knowledge to make confident decisions. Local chapters of the League of Women Voters enhance this with local content, such as boundary maps and community-focused insights.

LWVWV's Pioneering Use of VOTE411 in the 2024 General Election

The League of Women Voters of West Virginia (LWVWV) marked a significant milestone by adopting VOTE411 for the 2024 General Election, delivering comprehensive coverage from federal races—including presidential, senatorial, and congressional contests—down to the municipal levels. This ambitious implementation included nearly 400 races, showcasing the platform's scalability for even the most localized elections. LWVWV volunteers meticulously input candidate information, ballot measures, and jurisdiction-specific details, creating a robust resource that empowered West Virginia voters with unprecedented access to nonpartisan data across every level of government. This effort exemplified how VOTE411 enables grassroots organizations to amplify democratic participation in diverse electoral landscapes.

Gear Up for the 2026 Primary: Over 500 Races and Nearly 1,200 Candidates

Looking ahead, the LWVWV is ramping up for the 2026 Primary Election with an even more expansive deployment of VOTE411. This cycle promises coverage of over 500 races featuring nearly 1,200 candidates, spanning federal, state, county, and municipal contests. Building on the success of 2024, LWVWV teams are

already compiling detailed candidate profiles, race breakdowns, and voter resources to ensure West Virginians have fingertip access to everything needed for informed primary participation. This massive undertaking highlights VOTE411's flexibility in handling high-volume, local elections, setting the stage for heightened civic engagement as primary dates approach.

Building Trust Through Nonpartisanship

Rooted in the League of Women Voters' century-long commitment to democracy, VOTE411 maintains strict neutrality, earning trust across political divides. It doesn't just inform; it empowers by simplifying logistics that often deter turnout, from understanding ID laws to navigating mail-in processes. Feedback from candidates across West Virginia has been overwhelmingly positive, with many thanking the LWVWV for their diligent work, neutral questions, and for giving a platform to candidates from rural districts that rarely receive such visibility thus ensuring every candidate's message reaches voters equitably.

As the 2026 primaries draw near, VOTE411 continues to illustrate the power of nonpartisan approaches in strengthening democracy. Through the dedicated efforts of organizations like the LWVWV, it bridges gaps in voter information, amplifies underrepresented voices, and equips citizens with the tools for meaningful participation. In a divided political landscape, such resources remind us that informed voters are the bedrock of a thriving republic. LWVWV urges everyone to visit [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org), craft their voting plan, and make their voice heard.



Lyn Widmyer (LWV of Jefferson Co) and Julie Archer (At-large Member) at No Kings Rally, Charles Town, WV March 28, 2026

WHERE DO YOUR DUES GO?

By: Judy Ball, Co-President

LWVWV and West Virginia's three local Leagues, Jefferson County, Morgantown-Monongalia County, and Huntington Area all have two basic priorities:

1. Voter education
2. Advocacy aligned with LWV positions

Do any Leagues in WV have paid staff?

NO, everything we accomplish is thanks to the hard work of dedicated volunteers.

Much of what we accomplish uses digital communications, which are largely free — Gmail, Facebook, Substack.

However, some efforts require continuous funding for purchases to carry out our work.

Priority	Funding needs
Voter education	Printing of voter guides Software to produce voter guides VOTE411 subscription Website/digital management
Advocacy	FastDemocracy subscription Claude AI subscription (during session)

What are the implications of pay-as-you-can dues?

When LWVUS took over management of member dues, they instituted a pay-as-you-can model. Under this model, suggested dues range from \$20 to \$75. While acknowledging that League members vary in their ability to pay, this has introduced a hidden problem, especially for local Leagues where minimum payments are unsustainable.

Regardless of your payment level:

- LWVUS retains 33% of your dues payments.
- LWVWV receives 47% of your dues payments.
- Each local League receives **only 20%** of your dues payments.

Shares, by pay-as-you-can level:		
Pay-as-you-can level	State share	Local share
\$20	\$ 9.40	\$ 4.00
\$50	\$23.50	\$10.00
\$75	\$35.25	\$15.00

What about donations?

We are forever grateful for every donation we receive however large or small.

You may join or renew your membership at LWV.org **AND** you can make a donation to your local League at [JOIN LWV](#) while joining or renewing.



Beware: If you use the button at LWV.org, that donation will go to LWVUS, not to a local League in West Virginia or to LWVWV.



Take-away messages

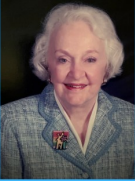
Minimizing your membership dues with the pay-as-you-can model is **not sustainable** for local Leagues in West Virginia. The DONATE button at LWV.org is confusing and **misleading**.

We have added a **Donate** button to LWVWV at LWVWV.org of which 100% goes to LWVWV and will be adding **Donate** buttons to local WV League websites.

We want all our members to be aware.

LEAGUE IN PHOTOS

A Half Century of Service
A Conversation with Betty Barrett





Join us on Saturday, March 14th, 2 PM
 The Woodlands
 1 Bradley Foster Drive, Huntington

Brought to you by the WV League of Women Voters and Huntington NOW chapter
 A story of leadership
 This focused interview explores:

- Women-led advocacy
- Coalition Building

This conversation reflects on the power of women's leadership, public service, and community-driven change.

All are welcome!


Recognition of Betty Barrett’s many years of service to the League of Women Voters and all women in West Virginia. Marcia Daoust (seated left) Betty Barrett (center), Martha Woodward (seated right), LWV of Huntington Area.



Black Policy Day, WV Capitol, February 24, 2026. Autumn Summers (Morgantown), Ron Allen (Morgantown), Julie Archer (League At-Large) and Judy Ball (Morgantown).



Black Policy Day, WV Capitol, February 24, 2026. Autumn Summers (Morgantown), Wendy Thomas (Huntington), Ron Allen (Morgantown), Teresa Koon (League At-Large) and Judy Ball (Morgantown).

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD



NEW PHOTO ID REQUIRED TO VOTE



All the details at GoVoteWV.com

REGISTER TO VOTE
BY APR 21

WV PRIMARY ELECTION
In-Person at Your Polling Place
MAY 12 – FINAL DAY

WV EARLY VOTING
In-Person, Every County
APR 29 - MAY 9

ABSENTEE VOTING
If Eligible

APPLY UNTIL MAY 6

Not sure if you need to vote by absentee ballot? Apply anyway. Then, if you need to vote in-person, take your absentee ballot with you.

Who is Eligible to Vote Absentee in WV?

- Illness, injury, other medical reason which keeps me confined
- Immobility due to a physical disability or "advanced age"
- Incarcerated or detained in city or county jail or detention facility or under home confinement, with exceptions
- Work hours/distance from county seat makes voting in person impossible
- Inaccessible early voting site or polling place
- Personal or business travel
- Attendance at college/other place of education or training
- Temporary residence outside of county
- Service as elected or appointed state or federal official



JOIN THE LEAGUE!

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

You can join local Leagues of Women Voters of Huntington, Jefferson County or Morgantown/Monongalia County, or the state league at:

[Join Us – LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WEST VIRGINIA](http://www.lwv.org)

LWV WV Board of Directors

Co-President
Lyn Widmyer
304-279-3201
lynwidmyer@gmail.com

2nd VP
Julie Archer
304-610-9094
julie@lwv.org

Director
Shirley Rosenbaum
304-599-2370
shirley.rosenbaum@gmail.com

Co-President
Judy K. Ball, PhD, MPA
240-997-1222
Balljk@aol.com

Treasurer
VOTER Editor
Roster Mgr.
Teresa Koon
304-590-5476
Teresa.m.koon@gmail.com

Director
Carrie Clendening
304-881-4404
ccwv2024@gmail.com

1st VP
Autumn Summers
304-619-8785
asummers3013@gmail.com

Secretary
Carline Shaw
304-676-5449
shawcpa1@gmail.com

www.lwv.org