

# *Bulletin of the Alexandria League of Women Voters*

November 2009  
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20 East Oak Street, Alexandria, VA 22301

League web site [www.lwvalex.org](http://www.lwvalex.org)

## Good things in the legislative package

At 8 p.m. on Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> the two major party candidates for Governor of Virginia will participate in a televised debate in Richmond with Judy Woodruff of the Public Broadcasting Corporation as moderator. In Alexandria, the debate may be seen on Channel 26. The Virginia State League and the AARP are the co-sponsors of this debate. Questions about issues of interest to League members are sure to be asked.

## Join the League

If you are reading this, and you are not already a League member, having joined either nationally or locally, then you should join at the local level. Dues are \$45 per year. Mail your check to the treasurer, Judy Miller, 507 North View Terrace, Alexandria, VA 22301.

## How to Contact the Mayor and City Council

Anyone may testify at the public hearing on November 21. Speakers fill in a form available in the Council Chamber and when called on have three minutes to speak. If you use a computer, you may contact Council by going to the city's web site.

From the home page, go to the Mayor and Council page and use the link for communicating with Council to write one e-mail that will go to everyone. You may also call City Hall at 703 838-4500, or you may send a letter to the Mayor and Council at 301 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

## The Women's Roundtable

This event is the State League's presentation of the issues that are likely to be important during the General Assembly session. Speakers at the Roundtable include members of the Executive Branch, members of the legislature, and the media and issue lobbyists. It will be held Wednesday, December 2 from 9:30 a.m. until noon in House Room 3 at the State Capitol in Richmond. At the conclusion of the roundtable, there will be a luncheon from 12:15 p.m. until 3 p.m. The roundtable meeting is free, but there is a \$30 cost for the luncheon. To make a lunch reservation, mail your name and check to LWV-VA, P.O. Box 621, Centreville, VA 20122-0621. Those who plan to go should also call Katy Cannady, 703 549-9386. That way, we can arrange a car pool.

## LWV-VA Voters Commemorative Book

The Equal Suffrage League, the precursor of the League of Women Voters of Virginia was formed in November 1909. The state League has published a book, *Virginia Women and the Voter, 1909 - 2009* to commemorate this history.

Every League member will be receiving a copy soon. If you enjoy this book and would like to have more than your personal copy, you may order additional copies by requesting them at:

LWV-VA  
P.O. Box 621,  
Centreville, VA 20122-0621.

## The Fannon Plan

Councilmember Frank Fannon has a plan that would dispense with the 2012 Council and school board election. He proposes holding those elections in 2011. The present Council would serve out its three year term ending in 2012. The new Council elected in 2011 would then take office to serve a term ending in 2015. After that all future City Councils would serve four years and elections would always fall in November of an odd numbered year when there would be no election for President or Governor. Mr. Fannon has been unable to get the support of the Mayor, Vice Mayor,

Mrs. Pepper, Mr. Krupicka or Mr. Smedberg for his plan. Mr. Fannon, Mrs. Pepper, and Ms. Hughes do not support the staggered term plan supported by other members of Council. For now, here is an impasse on making any changes.



## President's Letter

By Katy Cannady

Recently, I accepted an invitation to speak to the Alexandria Business and Professional Women on gerrymandering, a very timely and important topic. Once the 2010 census is completed, state legislatures across the nation, including Virginia, will redraw the boundaries of their legislative districts for state assemblies and Congress. More often than not, redistricting has turned into gerrymandering. Across the United States, few Congressional districts produce competitive races and the nation has suffered for this. We have a mean-spirited, highly partisan political climate. Closely contested political campaigns are where the important issues are discussed. When those don't happen, citizens are less informed and less involved.

In Virginia, the Democratically controlled General Assembly of 1990 used redistricting to draw the most favorable boundaries they could for their candidates. By 2000, the Republicans controlled the General Assembly and they did to the Democrats what the Democrats had done to them.

The Mayor and City Council are aware of the problems generated by the Presidential/Council election. While I got information from Mr. Parkin, Ann Leider, the chairperson of the Alexandria Electoral Board, informed the Council via e-mail on why we would have insupportably long lines for the 2012 election if it included Council and School Board candidates. In 2008, Alexandria voters took one minute in the voting booth to cast their electronic ballots. With the longer ballot we are now on schedule to have in 2012,

Please see *President's Letter* on page 3



*Some will be unaware of local election issues during a Presidential Election.*

*President's Letter from page 2*

each voter would need three minutes to four minutes to vote.

Ms. Leider ends her e-mail by writing: "From a policy perspective, the Electoral Board takes no position on the timing of the City Council and School Board elections, and we are committed to administering the election in accordance with your choices. But it would be irresponsible for us not to inform you of risks to the effective administration of the election, and the potential for serious negative publicity."

Mr. Parkin is planning to augment his Eslate voting machines with the older optical scan system we used previously. He may also open more polling places. I don't believe anyone can gauge in advance just how many extra voting machines, poll workers and polling places would be needed to get us back to the wait times we had in 2008 when lines were

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## Act now to avoid a 2012 election fiasco

By Katy Cannady

As mentioned in the last Bulletin, the previous City Council changed our Council election date from May to November. If nothing is done to change this again, the next Council election and School Board election will be held on the same day as the 2012 Presidential election.

I have consulted our Registrar of Voters Tom Parkin. He confirmed to me that if he had to conduct the 2012 election with the same resources as he had in 2008, prospective **voters would have to wait in line for four to six hours.**

Mr. Parkin is making contingency plans for using optical scan ballots in addition to the Eslate

computer voting machines we use now. Our Registrar's Office, first under Beverly Beidler and after her retirement under Mr. Parkin, has a history of doing all it can to accommodate voters and encourage voting. Even so, we cannot leave it to these good civil servants to work some miracle to avoid a possible voter melt down of historic proportions.

On election night in 2004 I watched CNN into the morning hours. From time to time that network showed voters waiting in line in Ohio at 11 p.m. and even later. That fiasco was caused by not

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The League of Women Voters  
Alexandria, VA

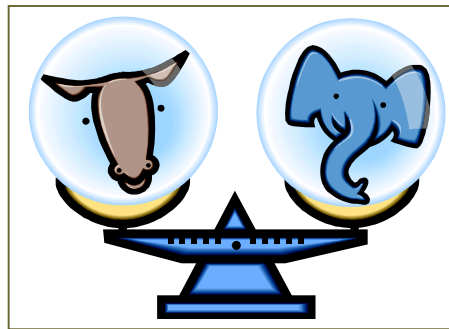
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distributing the correct number of voting machines to certain precincts. It was a black eye for the State of Ohio. On election night in 2012, do any of us want to be watching the lines in Alexandria late into the night, or worse yet, be caught standing in them? I call on all League members to contact the Mayor and City Council members to tell them this cannot be allowed to happen. Council will be considering possible changes to our current election calendar at its meeting on Saturday, November 21. Taking no action would leave us with the 2012 Presidential/Council election.



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Alexandria, VA 22301



**Customer Name**  
**Street Address**  
**City, ST ZIP Code**