



Breaking through Barriers for Women and Girls

<http://richmond-va.aauw.net>

August - September 2020

President's Letter

Summer greetings to GRAAUW members!!

I hope this newsletter finds you, your family and your family of friends healthy and safe. Life has certainly changed for all of us these last 5 months and we are all still adjusting to this new "normal" – whatever that means!! AAUW and GRAAUW are both adapting as best we can to these new rules, regulations and guidelines along with all the other aspects of our lives. While we are all definitely missing being together often and sharing smiles and hugs, for the time being we will have to continue doing that "virtually".

We have opened a ZOOM online meeting account for the branch and the board has already met using it. Jane Newell is our account administrator and we feel very fortunate to have this option. Fortunately it is not an expensive option and we can have up to 100 people attend our meetings! If you have not yet participated in a ZOOM meeting you simply reply to an email invitation on your computer or your phone. More details and instructions will be forthcoming.

Your board has been busy planning our fall calendar of board and branch meetings and we hope to have all of you attend in by phone or Zoom. It is certainly a different way of doing our meetings, but it is GREAT to see everyone's smiling face and hear each others' voices since we cannot be together in

person for the time being.

Please do not hesitate to contact one of us if you need anything or we can be of help to you during these challenging times.

We look forward to having our usual line up of great speakers for our meetings – just in a different fashion!! Please make a note to look at the scheduled for this fall – our first meeting will actually take place in **August** this year. Your board of directors and I look forward to "seeing you" soon!!

Laura

Lwimmeraaauw@aol.com

804-387-5315 or

804-496-6124

New Board elected for 2020-2021

Congratulations to our New Board elected pre COVID 19 at March Annual Business Meeting!

President - Laura Wimmer
VP of Programs - Kathy Kelley and Lisa Scott
VP of Membership - Marcia Phillips
Secretary - Hortense Mitchell Liberti
Treasurer - Jane Newell
Public Policy Chair - Trish Wallace
Community Outreach - Carol Stephens
Webmaster - Nora Narum
College/University Partners - Dulce Lawrence
Book Group - DeAnn Lineberry

More Chairs needed - see next page!

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Positions need Volunteers

In order for our branch to operate efficiently and appropriately we need to have all offices filled. To meet the AAUW goal of equity for women and girls we still need volunteers to fill the following vacancies:

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Chair
Scholarship Committee Chair
AAUW Funds Chair
Historian
Facebook
Finance Committee

Please note – two members could co-chair a chair position – it's a great way to become involved if you are a new member and learn the ropes from an experienced member! Please contact the Branch President at 804-496-6124 or lwimmeraaauw@aol.com.

Remember no meetings to attend in person. All can be done from the comfort of your couch!

Southwest District Fall Meeting Sept. 26th 10:00 - 11:30

Zoom meeting watch for details by email

Our branch recently agreed to move from the Southeast District to the Northwest District in VA. We join Harrisonburg and Winchester. Hope you will be able to join us by Zoom to hear from our AAUW of VA Co-Presidents, Leslie Tourigny and Suzanne Rothwell, and Co-VP's of Public Policy, Susan Burk and Denise Murden.

Program Notes

AUG. 19th - 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Your Amendment Vote in November: Why It Is Important! Nancy Finch - Speaker

Nancy Finch has worked on redistricting since 2010 when there was hope that the 2010 census reallocation of districts could occur without gerrymandering. That didn't happen. Through the Virginia Redistricting Coalition and OneVirginia 2021 she has continued to work to bring fairness and public participation in setting our legislative district lines. She has had a long career in journalism, public relations and lobbying. She recently moved to Richmond after 54 years in Chesterfield County.

These events are being presented through Zoom, are open to the public, and tickets (\$0) can be reserved through Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/your-amendment-vote-on-virginia-redistricting-reform-tickets-116227207707>

Please spread the word to your friends, family, and neighbors!

SEPT 15th - 7:00 - 9:00 pm

Shortage of Affordable Housing for Richmond Metro Area

Alice Tousignant - Speaker

Alice Tousignant is a community volunteer and consultant with HD Advisors. She has spent her entire career working on expanding and advocating for affordable housing and ending homelessness. She is retired from Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH) where she served as executive director for over 16 years. Alice holds a Masters of Social Work in Administration and Planning from VCU and a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of R. I.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/is-there-affordable-housing-in-richmond-tickets-116233871639>

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Election News - All You Wanted To Know And More

NEW LAWS

The 2020 General Assembly passed several Election Laws that change the rules from previous years. Please share this information with your family and friends!

1. **Photo ID's are not required.** You must have identification to prove you live at the address in the polling place you are voting. Your voter notification from the electoral board serves that purpose as well as higher education student ID or utility bill addressed to you at that address.
2. **Early voting is allowed.** Between Sept. 19 and Oct 31 you may vote in person at your local electoral board or satellite office, if provided, and no excuse is needed.
3. **Absentee and mail-in balloting** - You may request an absentee mail-in ballot online <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation> or my mail NOW until 5:00 pm Oct. 23rd or in person until 5:00 pm Oct. 31st. Requested absentee ballots will be mailed beginning mid-Sept. Return completed ballot by mail or in person to General Registrar by 7:00 pm Nov. 3rd. NO EXCUSE is need to request an absentee ballot. Ballot must be post - marked by Election Day and received within 3 days of Election Day.

TRACK YOUR MAIL-IN BALLOT ONLINE!

Be sure to check on your absentee ballot for the instructions to check the status of your mail - in ballot. It lets you know when it was received by the registrar's office.

Important links for information about voting!

- Visit elections.virginia.gov to register, request absentee ballot, learn your voting location, ID requirements & more. Need help? Call (800) 552-9745
- Visit VOTE411.org, a nonpartisan voters' guide published by LWV, to view your ballot and candidates' position statements.

Richmond City Board of Elections Office is moving before election to 2134 W. Laburnum Ave. See further in newsletter for more details.

Interested in Voter Registration Opportunities?

Attend the virtual Registration Training offered by the LWV-RMA on Aug. 15th 10:30 - 12:30.

This is a ticketed event by Eventbrite. You will receive your Zoom link once you have registered to attend. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lwv-rma-voter-registration-training-tickets-95756958641>

Satellite Offices

Chesterfield County will be voting on Satellite in person voting locations on Aug. 26th.

Richmond City will be voting on Satellite in person voting locations on Aug. 10th. No information re Satellite locations in Henrico County.

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Book Group

Continuing a 45-year tradition, our Book Groups meet on the third Thursday of each month. **All GRAAUW members and their guests are welcome.** Join us any time our book interests you OR come every month. For more information, please contact DeAnn Lineberry: deann.lineberry@yahoo.com or call 804-233-5352. During the pandemic, we have been meeting via Zoom, thanks to Nora Narum who sets up our gatherings. Though it's not the same as meeting in person, we enjoy our virtual get togethers and discussions. Many thanks to Nora who makes it possible!! **Be sure to let DeAnn know if you want the Zoom link.**

Aug. 20th 2:00 pm - We won't be discussing a book this month; rather we'll be scheduling our reading for the 2020-21 Branch year. If you're interested in joining us, please contact DeAnn and you'll be added to email list for the list of suggested reads and other notifications.

Sept. 17th 2:00 pm - *Rules of Civility* by Amor Towles

On the last night of 1937, Katey is in a Greenwich Village jazz bar when Tinker Grey, a handsome banker, happens to sit at a neighboring table. This chance encounter and its startling consequences propel Katey on a year-long journey toward the upper echelons of New York society ... where she will have little to rely on other than a bracing wit and her own brand of cool nerve.

AAUW of VA Supports the Redistricting Amendment on November Ballot
(see article at the end of this newsletter)

Membership Matters

Please welcome two new members to GRAAUW, Casey Hitchcock and Musua WaKabongo! We hope we will get to meet them “virtually” on our zoom meeting Aug. 19th! Also, Ramona Jones-Lemon joined last year, but due to COVID 19 interrupting our gatherings, many of you have not yet met Ramona either! Unfortunately, many of you have not yet paid your membership dues. Normally many of you pay at the Spring Banquet, but because we could not have that due to COVID 19, you may have forgotten. Dues were due by June 30th. We will be putting out our new Membership Directory in the next few weeks. If you have not paid your dues by then, you will be dropped from the directory. Don't delay! You can send your check made out to **GRAAUW for \$95 to Jane Newell at 509 South Cherry St., Richmond, VA 23220-6215.** Due to the slowness of the mail, please email Jane that you have mailed your check. You can also renew online and pay by debit or credit card. Several of our members, Gina Turner, Dottie Vye, and Marian Seigla have moved. If you have any changes, please go into the Members Services Database (MSD) and change your address and contact information and let Carol Stephens know so it will be correct in the new Membership Directory. Thank you!

DUES ARE DUE - YESTERDAY!

GRAAUW signs on to Amicus Brief in support of forcing Archivist to enter Equal Rights Amendment into the Constitution. (see next page)

City of Richmond Electoral Board moves offices! See Elizabeth Smith's editorial to RTD further in this newsletter!

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Public Policy Priorities 2020-2021

AAUW-VA public policy priorities this year are: (1) getting out the vote on November 3 and (2) building economic security for women and families. AAUW-VA Public Policy Co-Vice Presidents Susan Burk and Denise Murden issued a call to action at the [July Leadership Conference](#).

For **GOTV**, Susan and Denise urge members to:

- Educate and inform other registered voters and those eligible to register
- Facilitate voter registration through phone/text banking, no-contact letter/postcard
- Build awareness of enhanced voter accessibility
- Advocate for vote-by-mail, USPS, FairMapsVA referendum, census completion
- Collaborate with like-minded community organizations
- Arrange virtual town halls, candidate and/or issue forums, on-line registration drives
- Share Voter Guides and use to develop questions
- Contact your representatives

For **Economic Security for Women and Families**, AAUW-VA will advocate for legislation that will—

- Ensure equal pay for equal work
- Implement paid leave
- Institute protections against harassment in employment
- Raise the minimum wage
- Close the retirement gap
- Protect pregnant workers

Advocacy strategies include building a coalition around economic security for women and families; using social media, letters to the editor, and members to contact their representatives.

GRAAUW Files Amicus Brief in Support of Equal Rights Amendment

On June 29, 2020, GRAAUW, AAUW of Virginia, AAUW of Illinois, and AAUW of Nevada, joined by 18 other groups, filed an amicus brief in support of the Attorney Generals of Virginia, Illinois, and Nevada in their lawsuit against the National Archivist. The lawsuit, *Virginia v. Ferriero*, Case No. 1:20-cv-000242, pending in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, seeks to obtain a court order requiring the Archivist to publish the Twenty-Eighth Amendment (aka, the “Equal Rights Amendment”) to the Constitution along with certification of the 38 states’ ratifications.

GRAAUW’s [amicus brief](#) – unlike any other brief, including that of the Attorneys General – argued that the Plaintiff States have standing as representatives of their residents to seek enforcement of States’ ratification rights under Article V of the U.S. Constitution. In connection with this argument, the brief built on the work performed by members of GRAAUW and other amicus organizations:

Not only the States but also their residents have an interest in securing observance of Article V of the Constitution. Amici’s work in achieving their States’ ratification of the Twenty-Eighth Amendment perfectly illustrates this point. Amici invested considerable time, energy, professional skills, or funds in the campaigns to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. The Archivist, by refusing to publish the Twenty-Eighth Amendment, has single-handedly destroyed the value of Amici’s labor and the campaign work of other residents of Plaintiff States. Prospectively, the Archivist’s failure to perform his statutorily mandated ministerial duty effectively destroys the voice of citizens in the democratic process. If he is allowed to pick and choose which amendments to publish, as he has done with the Twenty-Eighth Amendment, he

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Amicus Brief continued

eliminates the decision-making authority Article V assigns to the State legislatures and, consequently, renders nugatory the voices of the people who elect legislators.

A decision from the Court is not expected for several months.

City of Richmond moves Electoral Board Office

Many of us will be voting by absentee ballot or by early voting which is allowed this year due to legislation passed by the General Assembly. If you wish to vote by absentee ballot in person at the Electoral Board office to make sure that your ballot has been received and processed, then you need to know that the office is moving to **2134 West Laburnum Ave.** Presently there is nothing on their website to alert the public to its move.

Please read the editorial Elizabeth Smith submitted to the *Richmond Times Dispatch*.

Dear Editor,

The Richmond City Board of Elections has moved the Registrar's Office out of City Hall to a location on West Laburnum Avenue, thereby causing confusion among the citizenry concerning management of the fall elections. In this year! A critical Presidential Election Year.

This confusion threatens the citizens of Richmond with the loss of essential accessible walk-in services for both voter registration and satellite polling on and before Election Day.

That the Board of Elections needs space to carry on its services is not in dispute. What is of concern is the apparent loss of daily accessibility to the servicing of citizen requests for voter registration and to early voting. The Board has

chosen to define accessibility as "by automobile". The new location is not early accessible on foot.

This new location is a mile distant from the nearest bus stop from which the pedestrian walks through a white neighborhood as well as passing by a grave monument that is an emblem of white supremacy. Such a pathway can be legitimately defined as racist. That the bus service is limited in its frequency adds to the trials of those who walk.

Will leaders entrusted with servicing the citizens of Richmond never learn that the rights of the people must receive precedence? How can the people charged with the administration of city electoral services threaten us with confusing steps into the dark ages of restricted public access?

This ill-advised move of the office charged with providing us with safe and secure voting — the essential expression of our democracy — to a large automobile parking lot at the edge of the city limits is unconscionable. This move with its attendant confusion threatens disenfranchisement of our black and brown brothers and sisters whose voices in these exceptional times are leading us to realize dreams of the full fledged participatory democracy articulated by John Lewis and Dr Martin Luther King, Jr.

Muriel Elizabeth Smith

Summer Leadership Meeting is a success!

Due to COVID 19 the annual Summer Leadership meeting was held via Zoom over a 3 day period for 2 hours each day. If you missed it, you can find many of the resources on the AAUW of VA website. Especially impressive and informative was the presentation **Policing Black Women's Bodies** by Dr. Angela Hattery and Dr. Earl Smith. Go to the website to be able to order there book at a 30% discount. <https://aauw-va.aauw.net/summer-leadership-meeting/>

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AAUW Supports Virginia's Redistricting Constitutional Amendment

Electoral district lines will be redrawn in 2021. The open question is who will draw those lines. Under current law, that job falls to the General Assembly, where the dominant party has protected its own interests at the expense of justice and equal rights. Worse still, the General Assembly has repeatedly engaged in racial gerrymandering. In 2016, a federal court concluded that the legislature had racially gerrymandered the 3rd Congressional District to protect the 4th District, then represented by Republican Randy Forbes. Under the court-created map, Democratic Donald McEachin took the seat. In 2018, a federal court again concluded that the legislature had “sorted voters into districts based on the color of their skin.” Under the newly drawn maps, Democrats took control of both chambers of Virginia’s General Assembly.



A “yes” vote **supports** transferring the power to draw the state's congressional

and legislative districts **from the state legislature to a redistricting commission** composed of state legislators and citizens.



A “no” vote **opposes** transferring the power to draw the state's congressional and legislative districts to a redistricting commission, **thus keeping the state legislature responsible for redistricting.**

AAUW of Virginia opposes racial gerrymandering and supports a proposed amendment to the Virginia Constitution to create a Commission to draw the electoral maps. Under the proposed amendment, the Commission will be comprised of 8 citizens and 8 state legislators, with equal representation from the two major parties and each chamber. The Commission will meet publicly, with all data and meeting notes available to the public. If the Commission cannot agree on a redistricting plan, the Virginia Supreme Court will oversee two experts, one appointed from each major party, in producing a plan. The full text of the [proposed amendment](#) is available through Legislative Services’ website.

The proposed amendment requires that every district be drawn in accordance with federal and state laws that address racial and ethnic fairness. It also mandates that “[districts shall provide, where practicable, opportunities for racial and ethnic communities to elect candidates of their choice.”

(continued on next page)

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The proposed amendment, however, does not require that the Commission itself be racially diverse. For this reason, some argue it suppresses black political power. Some members of the Legislative Black Caucus as well as the Democratic Party of Virginia oppose the amendment. In February 2020, Delegate Cia Price said: “When we are talking about changing the Constitution in the year 2020, if that does not fully include and protect minorities and communities of color that is not worthy of going into our Virginia Constitution.”

Racially inclusive criteria for gerrymandering may not be in the proposed amendment, but they are included in state law, which requires, among other things, that districts “be drawn to give racial and language minorities an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and shall not dilute or diminish their ability to elect candidates of choice either alone or in coalition with others.” The law also requires that districts be drawn to preserve “communities of interest,” which are neighborhoods or any geographically defined groups of people living in an area who share similar social, cultural, and economic interests.

Having considered diverse views, AAUW of Virginia continues to support the proposed amendment. According to GRAAUW member Carol Stephens, immediate past Co-President of AAUW-VA, “if we don’t amend the constitution, redistricting will remain in the hands of the legislators who are intent on maintaining their own power.” Saying that racial gerrymandering is “unacceptable, even for one more year,” Stephens notes that the constitution can be amended again if necessary and that there are checks and balances in the amendment that allow objection if they are racially gerrymandered. “It is incumbent upon both parties to make sure there is racial representation in the Commission appointment process when the appointments take place. Laws can be passed in future General Assemblies to ensure there is racial representation. It does not make sense to throw the baby out with the bath.”

Looking for a yard sign or sticker? Visit the website of [FAIRMAPS VA](#).

LUNCH BUNCH is suspended until COVID 19 is no longer an issue in eating in restaurants.

Practice Zoom session offered by Nora Narum for those needing an introduction on either computer, Ipad, or Smart Phone is Monday Aug. 10th at 2:00 pm.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81526813407?pwd=d0l5SGJmY0Exa09ockt5Zjl1NnUxdz09>

Meeting ID: 815 2681 3407

Passcode: 887661

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,81526813407#,,,,,0#,,887661# US (Germantown)

+13126266799,,81526813407#,,,,,0#,,887661# US (Chicago)

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