

# “The Prince William - Fauquier Voter”



November 2022 Newsletter

Susan B. Anthony reminds us, we must never forget the importance of making our voice heard:

*“Someone struggled for your right to vote.*

*Use it.”*



*From the Desk of the President ....*

**Janet Gorn, LWV-PWFA President**

## When are Book Bans Unconstitutional?

In both Prince William and Fauquier Counties, efforts to ban books from school curricula, remove books from the libraries, and develop lists of books some feel are inappropriate, has gained some recent traction polarizing views. Associate Professor of Law Erica Goldberg, at the University of Dayton, a First Amendment Scholar, has authored an informative paper



“When are Book Bans Unconstitutional” ([The Conversation](#), April 13, 2022) that provides some interesting background on this issue. Here is her article:

“The United States has become a nation divided over important issues in K-12 education, including curricula, remove books from libraries, and keep lists of books that some find inappropriate for students are increasing as Americans become more polarized in their views. These types of actions are being called “book banning.” They are often labeled “censorship.”

But the concept of censorship, as well as legal protections against it, are often highly misunderstood.

### **Book banning by the political right and left**

On the right side of the political spectrum, where much of the book banning is happening, bans are taking the form of school boards removing books from class curricula.

Politicians have also proposed legislation banning books that are what some legislators and parents consider too mature for school-age readers, such as “All Boys Aren’t Blue,” which explores queer themes and topics of consent. Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison’s classic “The Blue Eye,” which includes themes of rape and incest, is also, a frequent target.

In some cases, politicians have proposed criminal prosecutions of librarians in public schools and libraries for keeping such books in circulation.

Most books targeted for banning in 2021, says the American Library Association, “were by or about Black or LGBTQIA + Persons.” State Legislators have also targeted books that they believe make students feel guilt or anguish based on their race or imply that students of any race or gender are inherently bigoted.

There are also some attempts on the political left to engage in book banning as well as removal from school curricula of books that marginalize minorities or use racially insensitive language, like the popular “To Kill a Mockingbird.”

### **Defining censorship**

Whether any of these efforts are unconstitutional censorship is a complex question.

The First Amendment protects individuals against the government’s “abridging the freedom of speech.” However, government actions that some may deem censorship – especially as related to schools – are not always neatly classified as constitutional or unconstitutional, because “censorship” is a colloquial term, not a legal term.

Some principles can illuminate whether and when book banning is unconstitutional. Censorship does not violate the Constitution unless the government does it.

For example, if the government tries to forbid certain types of protests solely based on the viewpoint of the protesters, that is an unconstitutional restriction on speech. The government cannot create laws or allow lawsuits that keep you from having particular books on your bookshelf, unless the substance of those books fits into a narrowly defined unprotected category of speech such as obscenity or libel. And even these unprotected categories are defined in precise ways that are still very protective of speech.

The government, however, may enact reasonable regulations that restrict the “time, place or manner” of your speech, but generally it has to do so in ways that are content- and viewpoint- neutral. The government thus cannot restrict an individual’s ability to produce or listen to speech based on the topic of the speech or the ultimate opinions expressed.

And if the government does try to restrict speech in these ways, it likely constitutes unconstitutional censorship.

### **What’s not unconstitutional**

In contrast, when private individuals, companies and organizations create policies or engage in activities that suppress people’s ability to speak, these private actions don’t violate the Constitution. The Constitution’s general theory of liberty considers freedom in the context of government restraint or prohibition. Only the government has a monopoly on the use of force that compels citizens to act in one way or another. In contrast, if private companies or organizations chill speech, other private companies can experiment with different policies that allow people more choices to speak or act freely.

Still, private action can have a major impact on a person’s ability to speak freely and the production and dissemination of ideas. For example, book burning or the actions of private universities in punishing faculty for sharing unpopular ideas thwarts free discussion and unfettered creation of ideas and knowledge.

### **When schools can ‘ban’ books**

It is hard to definitively say whether the current incidents of book banning in schools are constitutional – or not. The reason: Decisions made in public schools are analyzed by the courts differently than censorship in nongovernment contexts.

Control over public education, in the words of the Supreme Court, is for the most part given to “state and local authorities. The government has the power to determine what is appropriate for students and thus the curriculum at their school.

However, students retain some First Amendment rights: Public schools may not censor students’ speech, either on or off campus, unless it is causing a “substantial disruption.”

But officials may exercise control over the curriculum of a school without trampling on students’ or K-12 educators’ free speech rights.

There are exceptions to government’s power over school curriculum: The Supreme Court ruled, for example, that a state law banning a teacher from covering the topic of evolution was unconstitutional because it violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits the state from endorsing a particular religion.

School boards and state legislators generally have the final say over what curriculum schools teach. Unless states’ policies violate some other provision of the Constitution – perhaps protection against certain kinds of discrimination – they are generally constitutionally permissible.

Schools, with finite resources, also have discretion to determine which books to add to their libraries. However, several members of the Supreme Court have written that removal is constitutionally permitted only if it is done based on the educational appropriateness of the book, but not because it was intended to deny students access to books which school officials disagree.

Book banning is not a new problem in this country – nor is vigorous public criticism of such moves. And even though the government has discretion to control what’s taught in school, the First Amendment ensures the right of free speech to those who want to protest what’s happening in schools. “



### **Webinar, Sunday, January 15, 2023, “*Book Banning and Book Censorship*”**

Lisa Varga, Executive Director of the Virginia Library Association, and a member of the American Library Association Policy Corps, is the webinar speaker. She oversees the 5,000 member Virginia Library Association and has been very active in the issue of book banning and censorship in Virginia and beyond. Recommend reading, “*Read These Banned Books, A Journal and 52-week Reading Challenge,*” an American Library Association Source Book, 2022. Available at your local library and on Amazon Books.



### **Elections are to be Fair, Observers are ONLY Observers Connie Gilman, Vice President**

Last Friday I went to the Sneads Ferry Library in Sneads Ferry, North Carolina. As I was returning my books and videos in the outside return bin, I commented to the person handing out voter information that she sure had a great day to be working there. I went over to talk, and I asked what she was doing. “Oh,” she replied, “I am an observer, and you know how important that is. One observer is a Democrat and one can be a Republican.” I began to thank her for her work, when she

looked past me and asked a man walking toward the library, “Are you here to vote?” He replied in the affirmative and she said, “Well, here is a voting guide” and began talking with him.

I walked away realizing, as an observer in Virginia one could not talk to potential voters let alone give them voting guides. So, as I sat waiting at the car wash, I called the Onslow County Board of Elections and asked if observers could talk to voters or hand them election literature. “Definitely NOT,” I was told, along with, “We will send someone out there immediately.”

Obviously, “Once a Leaguer, always a Leaguer” applied to me! Even in another state, I was doing my best to make sure elections are fair and that observers are only OBSERVING.



## [Give a Gift for Democracy](#)

### **Trish Freed, Treasurer**

Every year is an election year in the Commonwealth of Virginia! And, once again, the LWV- PWFA is on the scene educating and registering voters. It is our mission to advocate for fair elections, open and accessible government, and informed, educated, citizen involvement. We do this by providing accurate and real time information to prospective voters.

Our members:

- Conduct Voter Registration and distribute voter information throughout the community on National Voter Registration Day in every public library, as well as throughout the year at community events.
- Work with county public high schools and local community colleges to provide the opportunity for eligible students to register to vote.
- Co-host debates and candidate forums which provide opportunities for the public to learn of candidates’ positions on policies affecting the future of the country, state, or community.
- Visit jails to explain Restoration of Rights.
- Attend Electoral Board, Board of County Supervisors, and School Board meetings.

Make no mistake, these are challenging times. Seeds of distrust in our electoral system are being sown and many aspects of our democratic electoral system are under attack. Election officials have been threatened and misinformation is flooding the internet.

As good citizens and as members of the well-respected League of Women Voters, we must work diligently and tirelessly to maintain and rebuild trust in our electoral system. We must be present at community events, at community board meetings, and in the schools.

To do this, we urgently need your help. Please consider giving a [Gift for Democracy](#) this Fall.

As stated so eloquently by President Lincoln, we believe that, “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth,” and all our efforts are aligned with achieving this goal.

Please consider donating to our Operating Fund. Your donation should be sent to Trish Freed, LWV- PWFA Treasurer, 6151 Hemlock Court, Manassas, VA 20112. Please make out checks to LWV- PWFA.

Donations can also be made via credit card by clicking on the following link: [Donate \(paypal.com\)](#)  
We appreciate all of your contributions and we’re grateful for your continued support!





**Each One Bring One Prospective New Member**

The *League of Women Voters of the Prince William Fauquier Area* is a nonpartisan political organization. Our members are women and men who make a visible difference. They serve as community leaders who are using their experience in making democracy work and creating lasting change in the communities where we live.



**Meeting Tomorrow's Challenges Today**

**Empowering Voters Defending Democracy**

**JOIN US ....**

To be part of a network of dedicated volunteers who are empowered and share a passion for creating positive change on the local, state, and national levels.

**JOIN US ....**

To serve as a leader in your community! Shape the issues that ensure community health, vibrancy, equity, inclusiveness, sustainability, and resilience.

**JOIN US ....**

To add your voice to the work of one of the most respected and effective grassroots organization in the United States.



<http://www.PrinceWilliamLWV.org>  
[LWVpwfa@gmail.com](mailto:LWVpwfa@gmail.com)



*A Warm Welcome to our newest members!*

Unhui Dulin  
Cheryl Crow

Cathy Ring, Membership Outreach Director



**The LWV – PWFA November 13<sup>th</sup> General In-Person Meeting**

Laura Feld-Mushaw and Miriam Anver, Co-Meeting Directors

Please add November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. to your League calendar. Julie Bolthouse, Director of Land Use, Fauquier County, Warrenton Office, Piedmont Environmental Council, will be our speaker. Julie has been actively working on the very important land-use Data Centers issue.

The meeting will be at the newly renovated Bull Run Regional Library which will include an in-person tour of the new “Maker Space.” This space allows crafters access to some incredible equipment such as a loom, a long arm quilting machine, a sewing machine, and a 3 -D printer. For more information on the Maker Space <https://www.pwcva.gov/news/bull-run-library-reopens-new-look-and-modern-technologies>.

**NOTE: The LWV-PWFA League has not studied the issue of Data Centers and has not adopted a policy position.**



## **Prince William Sustainability Commission Starts Work on Climate Plan**

Randy Freed, LWV-PWFA Member

The LWV’s national position on climate change is to “Support climate goals and policies that are consistent with the best available climate science and that will ensure a stable climate system for future generations” (Position on Climate Change | LWVC.org). The LWV-PWFA has an opportunity to engage on climate issues, and to that end Ms. Giulia Manno, PWC’s Energy/ Environmental Sustainability Officer, talked with our chapter about these issues at our annual kickoff meeting on September 18. This article provides more detail on one of the key climate-related teams in the county, the Sustainability Commission.

In late 2020, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors (BOCS) adopted Climate Mitigation and Resiliency Goals, which include:

- 2030 - Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 50% below baseline 2005 levels (same as the national goal)
- 2030 - Achieving 100% renewable electricity in Prince William County Government operations
- 2030 - Becoming a Climate Ready Region and making significant progress to be a Climate Resilient Region
- 2035 - Sourcing 100% of PWC’s electricity from renewable sources
- 2050 - Achieving 100% carbon neutrality in Prince William County Government operations.

A year later the Supervisors authorized the creation of an 8-member, citizen-led Sustainability Commission, whose mission is to advise the BOCS on a plan – the Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan (CESMP) – to serve as a roadmap for the county to reach these goals. The Commission has been working with Ms. Manno – in conjunction with key county staff and with contractor support – on the CESMP.

The Commission has its work cut out for it – it will be a huge challenge for PWC to meet the goals, so it will take a strong and aggressive plan. So far, the key activities have been working to integrate the CESMP effort with the Prince William County Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan; receiving informational briefs from key county departments; providing early recommendations on how to fast-track county sustainability efforts; and receiving inputs from county residents. At this writing, the commission has developed a set of fast-track recommendations (e.g., accelerating purchases of electric vehicles for the county vehicle fleet, expanding the Reforestation Program, and a series of measures to increase the use of solar and other renewable energy sources throughout the county), which the BOCS is considering.

You can learn more about the Sustainability Commission’s activities through its website at

Sustainability Commission ([pwcva.gov](http://pwcva.gov)), or by attending its meetings on the fourth Thursdays of the month (except November and December, when they will be third Thursdays) at 7:00 pm at the McCoart Building.

By Randy Freed, LWV-PWFA member, and Chair of Prince William Sustainability Commission

The Sustainability Commission website at [Prince William County Sustainability Commission Fact Sheet .pdf \(pwcva.gov\)](#)



## League Co-hosted 10th Candidate Panel Event

The LWV-PWFA and the Committee of 100 co-hosted a well-attended successful 10<sup>th</sup> District Candidate Panel event on October 5, 2022, for Congresswomen Jenifer Wexton (D) and Hung Cao (R), at the Manassas Park Community Center. Dr. Stephen Farnsworth, Professor of Political Science and International Affairs and Director, Center for Leadership and Media Studies moderated the panel discussion. Both candidates expressed appreciation for the hosted event, format, questions, and the skill of the moderator.



## Voter Services

Carol Noggle, Voter Services Director

### -- National Voter Registration Day September 20th, 2022

Ten (10) out of the twelve (12) Prince William Public Libraries were staffed with League members on National voter registration Day. It was estimated that there were thirteen (13) voter registrations with over 660 voter information pamphlets distributed that day. After considerable discussions with the Warrenton Public Library Board of Directors in Fauquier County, for the first time, the Board agreed for the LWV-PWFA League members to register voters. Four (4) voters were registered and distributed an estimated 80 publications.

Two memorable photos from the Potomac and Central Libraries:



Muhsina Saieb came to the League table at the Potomac Library in Woodbridge. She announced she had just become a citizen two days ago and could she register to vote. Here is her photo with her citizenship certificate and completed voter registration form.



Jalisa Robinson of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Iota Epsilon Sigma Chapter, staffed the League table with Judy Hingle, Volunteer Director, at the Central Library, Manassas.

## -- Voter Registration Data

September 10<sup>th</sup>, Stonebridge Cook-Off: 2 voter registrations  
 September 13<sup>th</sup>, Potomac Place Senior Residence: 2 voter registrations  
 September 20<sup>th</sup>, National Voter Registration Day at the Libraries: 12 voter registrations in PWC and 4 voter registrations in Fauquier County  
 September 21<sup>st</sup>, Fairmont Senior Residence: 10 absentee ballots by mail.  
 September 24<sup>th</sup>, Manassas Latino Festival: 2 voter registrations  
 September 27 & 28<sup>th</sup>, at the NOVA Manassas Campus: 21 voter registrations  
 October 3<sup>rd</sup>, Westminster Seniors: 1 voter registration and 7 absentee ballots by mail.  
 October 8<sup>th</sup>, Manassas Fall Jubilee: 9 voter registrations  
 October 12<sup>th</sup>, NOVA campus (one day; 10 to 3 in cafe): 5 voter registrations  
 October 13<sup>th</sup>, Patriot HS cafeteria during lunch hours (Lisa Grant and Unhui Dulin) No voter .  
 October 14<sup>th</sup>, Wakefield HS, Fauquier; 24 voter registrations  
 October 15<sup>th</sup>, Haymarket Day: No voter registrations but many Top Tens distributed.  
 October 26, 27: Woodbridge HS: "SY18" and VR, estimated that 150 students registered.  
 November 1 & 2<sup>nd</sup>, Forest Park High School, 161 voter registrations.



## Observer Corps CORNER

### -- Observations of Warrenton and Fauquier County Meetings, Barbara Amster, Observer Corps Fauquier Unit

Barbara has attended the last 11 out of 12 Warrenton Town Council meetings and reports: They seem stoic and impassible when confronted with hundreds of citizens concerned about the proposed data center in Warrenton. During all of these meetings, residents have addressed the noise, 120-foot towers down RT. 29 at the gateway to Warrenton (and through many of their yards), traffic, destruction of Warrenton's rural nature, and health hazards. They have also cited Amazon's problems in Prince William County and how their promises of tax benefits were not realized. The matter is currently before the zoning commission, a fact which the Town Council cites in refusing to state an opinion on granting the special permission the data center would require. The town manager who pushed the data center plans through early processes has quit to take a job with Amazon, giving rise to much resentment and a possible lawsuit.



Other Town Council concerns include the crime on Haiti St., an African American neighborhood, "Roll out Warrenton", and the weekly BLM vigil. The last is of concern only to 5-6 "counter-protesters" who were dismayed to hear Council considers it a free speech event and welcomes it. Roll out Warrenton concerns the appropriation of Main St. for pedestrian traffic on weekends. Here the Council has been very responsive to Main St. business owners' reports of diminished sales, and readjusted the closure times to Friday and Saturday evenings only, leaving Main St. open weekend daytimes. The Farmer's Market has been moved back to its original location, off Main St. Residents of Haiti St. were assured that the police would provide more of a presence there, which the local paper reports they have.

My impression of the Warrenton Town Council is that it is trying to serve the community, but most citizens feel that will depend on what they decide about granting a special permit for the data center. The scandal of the previous town manager being in Amazon's employ also hangs over them.

As for the Fauquier School Board, which I have observed 6 out of the last 8 meetings, it is very professional, even in the face of some determined book banners (the exact same people who opposed BLM at the Town Council and every Saturday morning on Main St.). The SB has patiently explained several times its detailed procedure for removing books, to the Moms for Liberty, who appear every month before the Board with criticism of teachers, librarians, book awards committees, and the SB itself. Since the last meeting, M4L has withdrawn its request that 17 books be banned, awaiting SB action on a mandated statewide examination of book choices (Governor Youngkin). The Fauquier News has covered this whole process very thoroughly. Of note is that M4L has entered a candidate for the Nov. 8th SB election. Speculation is that this will disturb the board and its proceedings.

I spoke at the Warrenton Town Council meeting that reaffirmed its approval of the BLM vigil, since the League cosponsors that. Otherwise, I sit quietly wearing my Observer button. I have never spoken at a School Board meeting.



Barbara Amster, BLM Vigil

### **Black Lives Matter Vigil in Warrenton**

The vigil continues to be strong with the 124<sup>th</sup> vigil held on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

The Saturday vigils continue, and the Prince William Fauquier League is there to provide voter education to those attending.



-- **Observer Corps Prince William Electoral Board,**  
Carol Noggle, Voter Services Director

The October 26<sup>th</sup> Prince William Electoral Board meeting main agenda was to address the appointment of a list of new assignments (40-50), for election officers and to assure there was a balance of Republican and Democratic Party officers, especially for Chief and Assistant Chief, at each precinct. The list had been previously reviewed and accepted by both parties and subsequently quickly approved by the 3-Board members.

The Chairman raised a concern about the minutes from the last meeting because he thought they did not contain enough detail. The Board decided not to approve the minutes and to refer them back for additional details.

During the Public Comment period, two people raised their concerns about what they had witnessed, regarding the security check process of thumb drives and software for the scanners. Another person had a question about the contractor that was used for printing ballots. Another public comment was about why FOIA requests are not being processed. She also wanted to be sure that election officers would be well-informed on where observers can be in the polling place on election day.



### **League Meetings are open to all members!**

Board of Directors Meeting, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month, 7:00-9:00 pm

(No Board Meeting in November and December)

General Meetings and Events, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, 2:00-4:00 pm

**LWV-PWFA Website:** [www.princewilliamlw.org](http://www.princewilliamlw.org)

**LWV-PWFA Email:** [lwvpwfa@gmail.com](mailto:lwvpwfa@gmail.com)



### **LWV-PWFA Board of Directors**

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Please send in ideas for the January 2023 Newsletter by December 20<sup>th</sup>.  
Better yet, submit an article, ask some questions, share a joke!  
Connie Gilman, Newsletter Chair, [conniewg51@gmail.com](mailto:conniewg51@gmail.com)