

January 23, 2023

TO: Montgomery County Board of Elections

FROM: Barbara M. Sanders, Liaison, League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD
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RE: Use of Early Voting Centers as local precinct polling sites

First, the League of Women Voters would like to congratulate Director Boris Brajkovic on his appointment and offer a hearty thank you to Ms. McLaughlin and Ms. Ross on the superb jobs they did in their acting rolls this past year plus.

Additionally, thanks to all of you – Board members, permanent and temporary staff, and election judges – for all your efforts to conduct a successful Gubernatorial Election cycle and vote count. We know it was an overwhelming job with the many changes and delays that occurred this year. We also appreciate the opportunity to serve in the Polling Place Support Program, assisting with an extra set of eyes at the Election Day precincts.

Regarding the recap of this election cycle, our discussions with the PPSP coordinator and Board staff following the General Election brought up some suggestions that I expect will be included in the final report. There is one issue that has been noted in several election cycles that I wanted to highlight today, with the hope that some remedy might be made before the next election cycle in 2024.

The use of Early Voting Centers as precinct polling sites often leads to confusion for the general voting public. This was especially evident this year, with a return to local polling precincts after the use of high schools and Early Voting Centers on Election Day for the 2020 Presidential election cycle.

We know the Board emphasizes in its media and notices that a voter should use the assigned precinct location on Election Day, as does the League in our *Voters' Guides*. However, history shows some people still gravitate to the Early Voting centers that are open on Election Day – sometimes with the result of long lines, misunderstandings when directed to vote elsewhere, and, ultimately in many cases, the use of provisional ballots which are time-consuming for voters and the staff at all stages of the process. Additionally, Election Day provisional ballots often restrict the choices available to a voter who does not reside in the same districts as the precinct being served at the site.

What would be best is NOT to use the Early Voting sites on Election Day, or establishing a new regime with the use of the same voting centers, not neighborhood precincts, for all of the voting period. However, we know there a change to voting centers will probably take more than one legislative session and election cycle. Also we recognize there is a dearth of spaces to use in some localities for precinct voting, and there are six sites that will probably continue to be used for nine precincts:

- Marilyn J Praisner Community Rec Ctr - 05-23

- Mid-County Community Rec Ctr - 05-16 and 13-49
- Nancy H. Dacek North Potomac Community Rec Ctr - 06-04 and 06-08
- Potomac Community Rec Ctr - 10-13
- Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza - 13-05 and 13-10
- White Oak Community Rec Ctr - 05-13

We once again suggest the following ideas to help deter long lines or discontented voters as they reach the check-in judge:

- Create and post a large precinct map outside the building or facing outside on an exterior window, showing the residential area covered. Include the location of other nearby precinct polling places if they are visible on the map.
- Include a warning that IF YOU DO NOT live within this residential area, you will have to vote a provisional ballot and may not be able to choose a candidate for all the offices for your assigned districts.
- Use a Future Vote student or another volunteer (PPSP/LWV/others) to remind people to check the map for the residential boundaries for this precinct before standing in line.
- Provide the text address for voters to find their precinct location, and/or during the busiest hours, have a person available that can look up their site

We hope using some or all of these suggestions may make the day run more smoothly for the precinct staffs in these locations, for the voters who are assigned somewhere else, and for all of you working to verify and count acceptable provisional ballots in the 2024. Again, many thank for all your time and efforts to have the election and the tabulation of the votes run smoothly, in as timely a manner as possible.