

# State reps take an oath to serve you

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by Submitted to The Dominion Post

## Hold them to it

The West Virginia Constitution (Article 6-16) requires members of the Legislature to take this oath before entering into their duties: “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitution of the State of West Virginia, and faithfully discharge the duties of Senator (or Delegate) according to the best of my ability.”

The oath has a second part: “I will not accept or receive, directly or indirectly, any money or other valuable thing, from any corporation, company, or person for any vote or influence I may give or withhold, as Senator (or Delegate) on any bill, resolution or appropriation, or for any act I may do or perform as Senator (or Delegate).”

These are promises sworn by every representative in the West Virginia Legislature to serve the citizens of West Virginia with integrity and fairness.

The 2024 regular session of the Legislature kicks off Jan. 10. Limited to 60 days, it is a sprint, not a marathon.

The League of Women Voters (LWV) will be advocating for four legislative priorities.

First, we support ways to increase voter turnout and oppose barriers to voting. Election integrity is of the utmost importance, but voter access and election integrity are not at odds. We object to false allegations against the integrity of past elections, as our secretary of state trumpeted recently. It is not in the interests of the American public or West Virginia voters to question the election’s results after the people have performed their civic duty and election officials have certified the outcome.

Second, the LWV is committed to safeguarding equal rights. This means advocacy for the rights of women and members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as reproductive freedom. We oppose legislation that restricts private health care decisions. Health care providers also take oaths: to make the best health care decisions for their patients. Legislators should not interfere in those decisions.

Third, the LWV advocates for the protection of children and families, groups especially at risk in our state. We support legislation that promotes self-sufficiency and provides for effective programs to prevent or reduce poverty. That means adequate funding, not just rhetoric.

The path to self-sufficiency also includes “a thorough and efficient system of free schools” (Article 12-1). Such a system requires a competitive wage for teachers, motivation for teachers to establish a career in West Virginia and certified and accredited teaching and support staff. If we must expend public funds for “school choice” (as the courts have ruled), accountability is essential. In other words, the citizens of West Virginia deserve better than an educational system that ranks consistently at or near the bottom of all states for education.

Fourth, the LWV supports legislation to create a sustainable future. While climate change is a growing threat everywhere, we must recognize that fossil fuels have always been a threat to West Virginians in particular. When the natural resources are gone and the profits and jobs have left the state, we are left with uninhabitable land, contaminated water and unhealthy people.

We deserve a sustainable future for our youth and our economy. Therefore, the LWV supports expanded renewable energy sources in our state, reliable energy grids and infrastructure, clean water and protections for human health from the destructive impacts of harvesting fossil fuels.

Those are our priorities. With the legislative session almost here, what can ordinary citizens do?

As we have written before (DP-09-24-23), transparency in our Legislature may be limited by procedural shenanigans. Therefore, it falls to citizens to follow the Legislature’s actions in real time. Go to <https://www.wvlegislature.gov/> to monitor bills and legislative actions.

We urge you to reach out to your elected representatives and let them know you are following their votes and where you, their constituents, stand on the issues. Start now.

Don’t forget — they work for you.

**The League of Women Voters is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting informed and active public participation in government. For more information, go to <https://lwv.org/>**

Tags: 2024 legislative session, league of women voters, oath of office, voting, WV Legislature