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Treasurer's Report

On September 2026, the Blue Ridge Torch Club had an operating balance of $5,757.





December Torch Holiday Party
December 8, 2026

Torch Dinner November 10, LWVA Clubhouse Auditorium Doors open at 5:30, Dinner starts at 6:00. BYOB

"Critical Minerals: Securing America's Future" By Anne A Thomas:



As defined by Presidential Executive Order No. 13817 of December 17, 2017, "a critical mineral is a mineral (1) identified to be a nonfuel mineral or mineral material essential to the economic and national security of the United States, (2) from a supply chain that is vulnerable to disruption, and (3) that serves an essential function in the manufacturing of a product, the absence of which would have substantial consequences for the U.S. economy or national security".

Anne's talk will cover what are considered critical minerals, where they are found, who owns the resources, and who controls the final processing of the mineral into an end product. She will discuss the environmental impacts of mining and what is the United States doing to secure access to critical minerals and materials.

Anne received a B.S. in Metallurgical Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania (the first woman to receive this degree from Penn) and an M.S. in Materials Engineering from Drexel University. She spent her early career as a metallurgist but then switched to software engineering.

She and her husband Bill moved to Potomac Ridge in 2012. Both have served on several PR committees as well as the PR Board of Directors.

Menu for November Torch Dinner

Dinner will be catered by Fountain Grille. Menu will include Garden salad with garlic and butter bread bowl, pretzel bites with queso sauce and spinach artichokes as appetizers. Entrees will be Chicken Marsala or Beef Stroganoff over penne pasta, a Vegetable Medley, and a pastry plate for dessert. A Vegetarian/Vegan option will be available. Prices are $45 for members, $50 for guests.

Please leave a check with your building representative, or a bring a check or cash at the door. Or we accept credit cards now. For reservations go to blueridgetorchclub.org. Click on the red icon that says "November 10, 2026." The deadline for RSVP or cancellation is Friday, November 6. If Those who cancel after the deadline will be responsible for payment.

President's Message for November

With the holiday season approaching, I hope you enjoy time with family and friends. In November, Fountain Grill will cater another excellent dinner in the LWVA Clubhouse Auditorium, followed by a special presentation by Anne Thomas.

We will meet again in December for our holiday celebration. While there will be no member presentation, we can enjoy the fellowship of our club. Looking ahead to 2027, an exceptional lineup of speakers will inform, entertain, and inspire thoughtful discussion.

Wayne Kaiser, President, Blue Ridge Torch Club

Joyce Mitchell, October Torch talk


Joyce Mitchell

Joyce guided the audience through the basics of genetics and genomics to discuss the importance of both for health, and touched on how to look at relationships between populations and species to get a glimpse of evolutionary forces.

The biggest takeaway from her talk was to encourage anybody who has a question about specific genes to go to MedlinePlus.gov, the website for the public maintained at the National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health. The Genetics section of MedlinePlus.gov has specific linkages between genes and the diseases they influence.

This site is updated regularly and is completely free. She volunteered to personally assist anyone who would like help navigating the site.

New Member, Elizabeth Healy

Eizabeth Healy has lived in Northern Virginia for about 40 years. She retired in 2024 after 30 years as a Nurse Practitioner in research, primary care, urgent care, and hospital practices. She also volunteered with Medical Teams International, the Red Cross, Arlington Free Clinic, Fairfax County Medical Reserve Corp, Western Fairfax Christian Ministries Food Bank, and served on two small HOA Boards.

Elizabeth moved to LWVA-Magnolia-South in August 2025. She enjoys science, nature, and Lansdowne exercise activities. She recently joined the Magnolia and LWVA Activities committee and grateful to now be part of the Torch Club.


Elizabeth Healy and Joline Matheson


Fountain Grill Service Staff giving us a show

Torch Dinner

Dinner was catered by the Fountain Grille. The Servers were gracious, efficient, and fun.

Members and Guests had a great time!


Members and Guests Enjoying the Evening

The Patriotic Month of November, by Jim Grefer

When was the last time you thought of November as a patriotic month. Of course, on ***Veterans Day***, November 11, we honor all veterans of the U.S. Armed forces. That's patriotic. President Wilson proclaimed the anniversary of the WW1 Armistice Nov. 11, 1919. The U.S. Congress proclaimed the day a national holiday in 1938, and named it Veteran's Day in 1954.



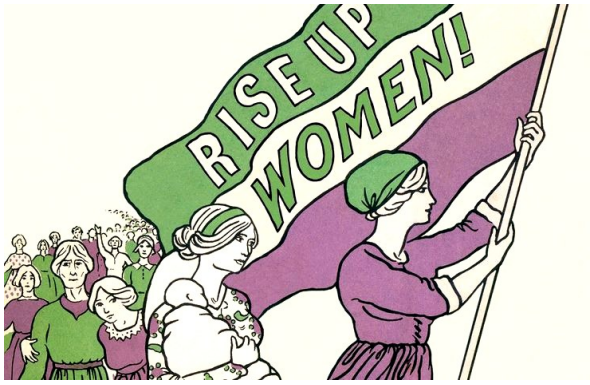
Thanksgiving Day, however***,*** is not normally seen as a patriotic holiday. It is generally attributed to pilgrims and religious leaders in Colonial New England, giving thanks the Almighty for a good harvest.

But the first national proclamation of Thanksgiving was given by President **George Washington**, to thank the Almighty for success in the American Revolution and for our opportunity to peacefully build a Constitutional democratic-republican government, and for the civil and religious liberty that followed. Years later, President **Abraham Lincoln** proclaimed Thanksgiving a National Holiday, following our victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. In his speech, Lincoln acknowledged the horrors of the war while noting that most Americans continued to live peacefully in liberty, stability, and harmony. He urged Americans to give thanks for these blessings.



Perhaps the most patriotic thing we can do is to participate actively in our system of self-governing. ***Election Day,*** November 3***,*** reminds us of the unique right American citizens have to do this. But it can also remind us of the struggles for Americans to gain these rights. After the Revolution, most white men had the right to vote. Voting rules and discrimination, however, meant the most American citizens still did not. It took years and many struggles for them to actually gain this right.

To cite a few examples, the **15th Amendment** states that the right to vote cannot be denied on account of race or previous enslavement. This right came, however, only after fierce battles of the Civil War, struggles by former abolitionists, freedmen, and Congressmen to enact the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and to pass and ratify the 15th Amendment in 1870.



The **19th Amendment**, prohibited the denial of voting by reason of sex. It came only after decades of courageous women's groups to gain rights to own property, sign contracts, and, eventually, to vote in elections. Even then, many women were still denied and had to struggle for decades to claim this right.

Similarly, the **17th Amendment** granted resident citizens of Washington DC electoral representation in Presidential elections; the **26th Amendment** granted 18-20 year old citizens the right to vote, and the **23rd Amendment** prohibited any government from enacting Poll Taxes, preventing discrimination of poor people in elections. Thus, America's elections have become increasingly democratic over our history.

Thanksgiving reminds us how blessed we are for a free nation and the government our founders established. **Veterans Day** reminds us that these must be defended, and to honor those who sacrificed to defend them. **Election Day** reminds us that all this depends on our thoughtful, honorable, and active participation.

As it turns out, November truly is a patriotic month.

Current Members as of end of October 2026

Charlene Ahmed
Syed Ahmed
Brian Allen
Linda Allen
Barry Berger
Fred Bishopp, Jr
Murray Bradley
Page Bradley
Brenda Brohard
Christine Caldwell
Kelly Colinge
Sheila Cramer
Steve Creskoff
Kay Curley
Tom Devaney
Joe Dockery
Marylynne Dockery
Nancy Downey
Hosny El-Khordagui
Joe Gibson
Rosa Gibson
Helena Grefer
Jim Grefer
Carol Hall-Veit
Kenton Hamaker
Peggy Hamaker
Elizabeth Healy
Neelam Henderson
Wes Henderson
Kathleen Hughes
Fran Hurley
Murray Johnston
Wayne Kaiser
Maria Kelly
Peggy King
Ken "Crash" Konwin
Judith Kory
Eva Leavitt
Michael Leavitt
Barbara Leone
Joline Matheson
Jenny Mayberry
Sam Mayberry
Doug McCollum
Sue McCollum
Joyce Mitchell
Elsa Moustafa
Andrew Norton
Bill Phillips
Pat Phillips
Memory Porter
Ann Schmitt
Hugh Sockett
Dennis Spriggs
Judy Stone
Anne A Thomas
Bill Thomas
George Viener
Bob Wiley
Janet Walker
William Walker
Britt Wilford
Terry Wilford
Dona Wolf

Torch Club Officers wish you a Happy and Peaceful Thanksgiving Day

- Wayne Kaiser, President: wkaiser2367@gmail.com
- Ken "Crash" Konwin, Vice President: kkonwin@aol.com
- Jim Grefer, Secretary/Newsletter Editor: greferjames@gmail.com
- Fred Bishopp, Co-Treasurer: fredbishopp@hotmail.com
- Joline Matheson, Co-Treasurer: jnjmat@gmail.com
- Dona Wolf, Past President: donawolf@aol.com



"… the modern patriotism, the true patriotism, the only rational patriotism, is loyalty to the Nation all the time, loyalty to the Government when it deserves it."

Mark Twain, *The Czar's Soliloquy*,
Published March 1905 in the North American Review