



THE VOTER

January, 2020 Vol. 47 No. 1

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area
Serving the Citizens of Pickens, Oconee and Anderson Counties

Co-President's Message

Happy New Year/New Decade!

A local newspaper recently had an article written by the county live-stock agent titled "Protect Your Winter Pastures." The author wrote about five different tasks required for protecting the winter pasture: evaluate your pastures early, supplemental feeding, cull animals, group animals, and plan ahead.



Sandra Gray

Being a hobby farmer myself, I know what an agricultural pasture is and understand the need to maintain one's pastures through the winter. But as I was reading the article, it reminded me that as members of the LWV, we too have pastures here in South Carolina using the alternate definition of pasture "to refer to a person's situation in life" -- that need to be protected. There are many problems to be addressed in our state including education where our high school dropout rate is still at 2.2 % or 4,979 students per year, and health care for South Carolinians who can't afford it. South Carolina ranks 49th in the nation for cost of healthcare and 41st for health outcomes. The prevalence of domestic violence still looms over the women in our state where South Carolina ranks fifth in the nation for women killed by men. These are just a few examples of the improvements needed in our residents' pastures but, keeping to the theme of the LWV, I'll stick to the pasture of politics.

So here we are at the beginning of a new year and a new decade. It is a presidential election year so first on "early pasture evaluation" might be a concerted effort to find those eligible voters not likely registered to vote in South Carolina yet. Young men and women are turning 18 every day (about 60,000/year in the state) and approximately 190,000 new folks move into South Carolina each year.

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League of Women Voters Clemson Area
*Serving the Citizens of Pickens, Oconee, and
Anderson Counties*

P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633

www.lwvclemsonarea.org

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- Cheryl Lee, Voter Registration
- Eleanor Hare, Vote411
- Liz Vogt, *VOTER* Editor

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, January 21, 2020

7:15 p.m.

OLLI

GENERAL MEETING -- EDUCATION. Lakes and Bridges
Charter School/Gerrymandering Postcard Mailing

Saturday, January 25, 2020

9 a.m.

Columbia, SC

Leadership, Education and Advocacy (LEAD) DAY
Register at the state League website: www.lwvsc.org

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

7:15 p.m.

OLLI

GENERAL MEETING - TBA

Saturday, February 29, 2020

10 a.m.

OLLI

Program Planning for National and Local

*OLLI, 100 Thomas Green Clemson Boulevard, Clemson 29631.
The public is invited to all LWVCA meetings.*

Co-President's Message Continued

We also need to continue the evaluation and monitoring of voting machines to assure that the state is using the best, most accurate, fool-proof method for recording votes. According to **Andy Brack** in his *Statehouse Report*, voter registration has increased to 75% over the last decade. That is impressive, but we still need to work on getting these registered voters to participate in the elections. "Supplemental feeding" can be offered through education by offering comprehensive voter guides, such as those at VOTE411.org, and by holding and urging participation in a political forum. The LWV was founded on the idea that a nonpartisan civic organization could provide the education and experience the public needed to assure the success of democracy.

Another point of pasture protection was the necessity to "cull animals." Here in South Carolina, the Democratic Party presidential primary is scheduled this year for February 29 with a whopping 14 candidates on the ballot (Ballotpedia.org). With only one winner chosen, I can see some winter culling happening on that date for sure. It is an open primary meaning that anyone -- Republican, Democrat, Independent, etc. -- can vote in the Democratic Primary. The Republican Party decided in September to cancel its presidential primary so no culling there. On the other hand, we must work so that no eligible voters are culled or restricted from their right to vote. A fourth topic in the newspaper article, called "group animals," recalls the topic of redistricting. Redistricting is the process of drawing new congressional and state legislative boundaries. Being a new decade, it is time for the national census, and this is relevant since upon completion of the 2020 census, South Carolina will draft and enact new district maps. An accurate census count is important because it will determine where in the state the number of congressional seats is apportioned.

Co-President's Message Continued

In 2011, the state adopted guidelines that recommend all congressional and state legislative districts be contiguous and “attempt to preserve communities of interest and cores of incumbents’ existing districts.” That sounds a little to me like grouping animals by their needs. The League, however, supports redistricting reform that does not further the interest of a group or candidate. Rather, districting lines should be drawn up by an independent commission, so that legislators represent voters from a full range of citizens that live around their communities. No grouping of similar animals here.

Finally, the article encourages “planning ahead “during the winter months for a successful summer pasture. February is the traditional month that local Leagues participate in a Program Planning meeting. At this meeting, each League member at a grassroots level can participate in the selection of local, state and national issues on which to focus their energies and time. It is a time for planning ahead, and I encourage all League members to attend that meeting in February for a good discussion on how we can work toward improving the “pastures” in South Carolina and the nation.

Sandra Gray
Clemson Area LWV Co-President

LEAD Day – Columbia SC January 25th

Why should you go to LEAD (League Education and Advocacy Day) on Saturday, January 25th in Columbia?

1. Because you are not just a member of the Clemson League. You are also a vital part of the 1,100+ member League of Women Voters of South Carolina, scattered across the state in 13 local leagues (soon to become 14, we hope!). The League probably has more impact on public policy at the state level than it does at the national level, thanks in part to our full-time volunteer lobbyist and our strong, locally managed voter service efforts.
2. Because we need each other. It is always good to meet people from other leagues, share our successes and get new ideas for programs, advocacy, voter service, fund-raising. We need to support one another.
3. Because we have two great speakers, **John Ruoff** and **Laura Woliver**, plus networking opportunities, a look at the issues coming up in the General Assembly and reports from our working groups.
4. Because it is a bargain at \$25 for coffee, lunch, and materials. It's a better value for the dollar than the new Star Wars movie.

Register NOW at the state League website: www.lwvsc.org

Submitted by Holley Ulbrich

Preview of January Meeting – Lakes and Bridges Charter School

Lakes and Bridges Charter School is the first public South Carolina school for children with dyslexia in the Southeast, and the fourth in the nation. The school is now located in Easley, South Carolina and serves 155 students. The idea began at Clemson's Moe's Coffee shop about five years ago when a support group for parents of children with dyslexia were meeting with retired teachers. The parents were struggling and looking for solutions to teach their children to read. **Nancy Linvill**, **Debbie Vaughn** and several retired teachers worked for two and a half years to write the charter and start Lakes and Bridges Charter School.

Nancy Linvill taught learning disability students at Edwards and Central Elementary for 21 years. Most of her students had dyslexia. During that time, she was instrumental in getting *Project Read*, an effective reading program for struggling readers, into Southern Wesleyan. The program is still being used to train teachers there today. Nancy was born and raised on a farm in central Indiana. Nancy and husband, **Dale**, moved to Clemson in 1980, when Dale became the Clemson University Agricultural Meteorologist. The Linvills have three children, and six grandchildren. Their youngest son, **Darren**, is a professor at Clemson and spoke to the League last year about his work with Russian intervention into U.S. social media.

Debbie Vaughn was raised in Clemson and graduated from Daniel High South School. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the College of Charleston and her Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of South Carolina. She worked at the College of Charleston for 16 years in various roles, beginning as a reference librarian and ultimately becoming the Director of Undergraduate Academic Services. She moved back to Clemson in 2012. Debbie and her husband, **Bo Crader**, have four children ranging in age from 11 to 4. She began working on the charter school committee with Nancy and others in the fall of 2015. Two of her children began attending Lakes and Bridges Charter School in August 2018 and are now in 2nd and 6th grade there. Her other two children attend Clemson Elementary School.

Gerrymandering: Postcard Mailing

Local Leagues will host postcard parties, where members and guests write their legislators asking for redistricting reform in 2020. Our first postcard party will be in conjunction with our meeting on January 21, 2020. We will provide the postcards and legislators' addresses. Based on the Census of the state's population, the state legislature redistricts the U.S. House of Representatives, the state Senate and the state House. Partisan gerrymandering is the intentional use of redistricting to benefit the party in the majority.

The League's goal is to ensure that the maps generated based on the 2020 Census serve the important goals of reducing polarization, creating conditions that would require legislators to respond to a broader range of voters, and reducing the voter apathy that arises from predetermined election outcomes. Please come prepared to write our South Carolina Legislature members urging them to pass the bill addressing this issue, H3054. This bill creates an independent redistricting commission that would operate openly and give the public access for input, and reject lines drawn for incumbent protection or preferential treatment for any political party.

Submitted by Michael Ellison

New Member Bio

Kathy Naeseth has always been interested in public affairs. As a new member of LWVCA, she is eager to get involved in several issues and is particularly interested in getting out the vote efforts. The summer before her first year in college, she interned for **Strom Thurmond** in D.C and attended Watergate hearings.

Kathy grew up in Sumter, graduated from Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina and was a teacher for 29 years, instructing 6th grade students in history. While teaching military dependents in Italy a few years after graduation, she met her husband, **Eric**, an Army officer. (She also climbed Mt. Vesuvius.)

They lived in Germany and Arizona for relatively brief periods. Later, they moved to Maryland, where they raised their two daughters, Eric worked in military intelligence at the Pentagon, and she taught school. As a teacher, she was very active in her state and local teachers' organization.

She and her husband chose Pendleton from among many upstate South Carolina communities and love living there. They are active in Holy Trinity Episcopal Church and Post 113 Legion Auxiliary in Pendleton. Their two daughters live in Charlotte, North Carolina and Bloomington, Indiana.

UPCOMING VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE

If we register voters who are now 17, but will be 18 on or before November 3, 2020, they can vote in the primaries and then in the general election. Let's go all out for our three counties and register as many high school students as we can.

Currently, we have the following schools set up to register voters:

Daniel High School - January 8th and 9th

Liberty High School is set up for one day only - January 17

Seneca High School - January 23

We are waiting to hear from Easley and West-Oak High Schools.

If you are available to volunteer to register voters in Oconee County, please contact **Linda Gahan** (glinda1942@gmail.com), or **Pam Warren** (pamelawarren7@yahoo.com).

For Pickens County schools e-mail **Mary Tavalacci** (mtavo52@yahoo.com).

Submitted by Cheryl Lee

Review of the November Meeting - SCEL P

On Nov 19, 2019, **Michael Corley** of the South Carolina Environmental Law Project (SCEL P) gave us an excellent overview of how legal protection of public property works. Michael, who has an engineering degree from Clemson and a law degree from USC, recently moved from the South Carolina coast, the site of much action requiring environmental law efforts, to be Upstate Coordinator for SCEL P. SCEL P action to protect public property in the Upstate is new, relative to ongoing efforts to protect coastal South Carolina. Michael described his work towards cleaning up a section of the Reedy River in the south side of Greenville, specifically, the Bramlett Street site of a former coal gasification plant that operated until the 1950s and is owned by Duke Energy. A nearby coal gasification site on the west side, also owned by Duke Energy, has been completely remediated and is now the site for Greenville's future Unity Park, a \$60-million investment.

The Bramlett Street site borders a long-standing, modest African-American community. The community had been working to get the site cleaned up; SCEL P has stepped up to help. The first step has been water testing to supplement that done by Duke Energy (started in 1994). Recent work has been to prepare a report, available at the SCEL P website (scelp.org), that makes concrete recommendations for immediate cleanup. The goal is to bring public pressure to press Duke Energy to act; that strategy can be quicker and more effective than legal suits, which will be the next step, if needed.

It will be interesting to follow the progress of this project and the work of SCEL P in the Upstate.

Submitted by Ruth Reed

Program Planners Needed!

It's time to begin thinking about our annual program planning meeting. That's when the membership comes together for a work session to suggest topics for future meetings. They offer thoughts about any topics that are of interest to the local league. The suggestion to have a meeting on Artificial Intelligence and the proposal for a local study of election districts were products of program planning. We will probably discuss bylaw changes, such as the proposed change in tax status.

Program planning is also where we discuss instructions to our delegate(s) to Convention. Since 2020 is an even-numbered year, we will discuss the National Convention. There may be proposals from individual leagues that need discussion. For example, two years ago, several leagues were asking LWVUS to adopt a study of Artificial Intelligence. We asked our delegates to support the study.

Program planning is very informal. A few people always bring snacks, and we sit around and share ideas. Please participate: Saturday, February 29, 10 am at OLLI!

Local Study Recommendations - 2020

In a case of unanticipated consequences, when the Pickens County Legislative Delegation increased the number of members of the Pickens County School Board from six to seven, it inadvertently increased the complexity of county elections. When both the school board and the county council consisted of six members, the county was divided into the same six districts for county elections. School board districts were identical to county council districts. Dividing county citizens six ways for one election and seven for the other could, theoretically, result in forty-two voting districts. For the 2018 General Election, only 3 new voting districts were required, but this was a 10% increase in the number of ballot types. Any increase in complexity is a threat to the accuracy of elections. The effect on elections resulted in the adoption of the study of the composition of the Pickens County Council at our 2018 Annual Meeting.

Recommended local position (1): “We support that committees, commissions and councils consist of an odd number of voting members.”

Discussion:

Tie votes on the 6-member Pickens County School Board were sufficiently troublesome to the efficient operation of the board that the Legislative Delegation increased the number of members to seven. Although members of the current council report having almost no problem with tie votes, our concern is with the long-term functioning of councils.

Recommended local position (2): “We support increasing the membership of the Pickens County Council to seven members, elected from the same single-member districts as the School Board members.”

Discussion:

- Pickens County is expected to show major population growth in the 2020 census. Having fewer distinct ballot types, and thus, an election that is easier to administer, may be more difficult. Minimizing the number of ballot types will make our elections more trustworthy.
- Since changing the composition of the school board is not an option, increasing the number of county council members is the only available avenue for minimizing the number of ballot types.
- Adding a council member, including member expenses, would probably cost the county about \$25,000 a year.
- Citizens opposed to increasing the size of council have told us that doing that will increase representation from Easley and decrease their own representation. They also cite cost.
- Simplification of the election process should save election costs, such as pre-election testing of electronic ballots and absentee ballots and printing emergency and failsafe ballots.
- At-large membership will not solve this problem, so it is not addressed.

Recommended local position (3): Remove the current position: “We support returning to the current structure of the Pickens County School Board with six area seats and one or three at-large seats.”

Discussion:

The Legislative Delegation recently increased the number of members of the Pickens County School Board from six to seven. They considered adding the seventh member as an at-large seat and preferred seven single-member districts. Our primary concern was that the 6-member board, which was subject to tie votes, was sometimes dysfunctional. The Delegation responded to our concerns by creating the seventh seat and they are highly unlikely to change the School Board membership again soon.

Submitted by Linda Gahan, Eleanor Hare, Ruth Reed, Sarah McNeill, Aleta Robinson, and Ada Lou Steirer

Clemson City Council *1st and 3rd Monday, 6:30 pm*
Seneca City Council *2nd Tuesday, 6:00 pm*
Pickens County Council *1st Monday, 6:30 pm*
Oconee County Council *1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm*
Anderson County Council *2nd and 4th Tuesday, 6:00 pm*

Pickens County School Board *4th Monday, 7:00 pm*
Oconee County School Board *3rd Monday, 6:00 pm*
Anderson Co. South School Board *3rd Monday, 6:00 pm*

Contribution Form

League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area LWVCA, P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SOUTH CAROLINA 29633

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email address _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____ Phone (opt) _____

_____ I wish my contribution to remain anonymous.

_____ I wish my contribution to be tax deductible where allowed by law. My check is made out to the "League of Women Voters Ed Fund" which is a 501(c)(3) organization.

_____ I wish to support the League's action priorities. My check is made out to the "League of Women Voters" and is not tax-deductible.

Visit our website at www.lwvclemsonarea.org and contact us at lwvclemson@gmail.com.

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