

League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area



LEAGUE LINES

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Saturday, January 19 - LEAD - League Education and Advocacy Day. All members are encouraged to attend and bring guests. Join us for an exciting and informative day at the SC Education Association building in Columbia. Registration details and payment options are available [Here](#)

Tuesday, January 22 - DOES MY VOTE COUNT? Richland Library, 1431 Assembly Street, 5:30-7:00 ([See page 5](#))

Thursday, February 14 - LWV is 99 years old!

Thursday, February 21, Program Planning Meeting, at the Lourie Center, 11:45

Thursday, April 18, Public Policy Luncheon at Lourie Center

Thursday, May 16, Annual Members Meeting and Social. Place TBD

Friday and Saturday, May 4-5 - LWVSC Convention in Charleston



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS MONTH?

Article	Page
View From River's Edge	2
Richland County Delegation Improves it's Process	4
Does my Vote Count?	5
SCANA, Dominion and The League	6
Can we Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment?	7
Photo Gallery (the 2018 Holiday Party)	8
Board Contact Information	10
Quick Links	11

VIEW FROM RIVER'S EDGE

Janelle Rivers

Sometimes what's missing is at least as important as what is said. The *Statehouse Report* recently sent a survey to all 124 S.C. House members and all 46 S.C. Senate members asking about Legislative priorities for the coming months. Only 11 lawmakers responded to the 10-question survey. *Statehouse Report* contacted eight more. So, the sample is only 19 of 170 lawmakers -- only 12%. It's dangerous to predict from a sample like this. Nevertheless, let's examine what these lawmakers said. <http://www.statehousereport.com/2018/12/14/news-education-tops-priority-list-for-lawmakers-in-2019/>.



Education was the issue considered most important for the 2019 legislative term. South Carolina's lawmakers have over-demanded and underfunded in this area far too long. As a former educator and administrator, I heartily endorse that priority. I've often said that anyone who has a simple solution for meeting the needs in public education doesn't understand the problems, which are much more complex than many people realize.

So what else do the legislators have on their minds? The reform issues that respondents listed were

- Utility reform;
- Tax reform;
- Reforming the state's education formula;
- Restructuring the state's higher educational institutions; and,
- Ethics reform for legislators.

Lawmakers listed some restructuring issues:

- Restructuring the state Department of Social Services;
- Restructuring state constitutional offices so more are directly under the governor; and,
- Improving access to health care for poor people.

There is some unfinished business:

- The possibility of selling Santee Cooper, and
- A complete solution to the SCANA debacle.

Among the politically-charged issues mentioned as likely to appear on the agenda were:

- Closing the Charleston loophole, a state bill that would increase the time of a gun-purchasing background check for certain buyers,
- Pushing by some lawmakers for stricter access to (or as some might say, "Legislative control of") abortions in state
- Protecting the state's water resources and

- Protecting the state from offshore drilling.

So, what is missing? Here are some hints.

It's an issue the General Assembly will avoid unless the voters demand change.

It's the League's priority.

It's the issue closest to lawmakers' self-interest.

I heard a pundit say recently that voters don't usually pay attention to process issues. We need to find ways to fire up concerns about this one. The missing issue is **redistricting--yes, gerrymandering.**

After years of ducking this issue, the Supreme Court again considered the issue of partisan gerrymandering in December, 2018, by hearing the North Carolina case known as *Rucho v. Common Cause*. Whether a helpful Supreme Court decision is forthcoming or not, gerrymandering is relevant for South Carolina voters. When lawmakers can protect their own seats by gerrymandering, elections don't provide meaningful choices, and elected representatives have little incentive to compromise. Lawmakers who are likely to face opposition have more incentive to listen to all voters. We're likely to have greater interest and ultimately, better representation when voters have choices, and that's more likely if South Carolina can create a more open redistricting process.

Can we rouse enough interest among South Carolina's voters to demand an open redistricting process after the 2020 census? If it's going to happen, spring 2019 is the time to put the pieces in place.

You can help. Invite your friends and neighbors to come with you to the January 22 forum at the Main Library at 5:30. Remember, too, that Sally Boyd (sallyb@mailbox.sc.edu) coordinates a group of trained presenters who can provide a program on gerrymandering/redistricting for local groups that are interested in knowing more about the issues and options.

[BACK TO TOP](#)



RICHLAND COUNTY DELEGATION IMPROVES ITS PROCESSES

Unlike the Lexington County Delegation, the Richland County Delegation has been meeting only once a year, but change is coming. The Richland County Delegation met on December 13, 2018, and several League members attended.

Much of the meeting was devoted to the process for managing appointments to boards and commissions. Representative Wendy Brawley and newly elected Senator Dick Harpootlian began a discussion about need to improve Richland County's process for appointing representatives to boards and commissions as a result of concerns about one of the positions. There had been a lapse of roughly eleven months between the closing of applications for the Airport Commission position and the scheduled meeting of the Richland County Delegation's nominating committee to make a recommendation. Subsequently, an announcement about reopening the position had been distributed without putting the issue to a vote of the entire delegation. Delegation members agreed that the process was flawed, and that they need to set up a better process going forward.

The delegation made two major changes. The delegation agreed unanimously to meet more often than once per year, possibly even monthly, if needed. The other important outcome was that the delegation voted to reopen the application process between January 7, 2019, and February 7, 2019, before making any appointments to any of the open positions. An announcement will be forthcoming from the Richland County Delegation Office regarding the process for reopening positions for the Airport Commission, COMET Board of Directors, Columbia Area Mental Health Board, Election Commission, First Steps Board, Forestry Commission, Midlands Technical College Commission, Midlands Regional Education Center, Recreation Commission, Richland/Lexington Special Needs Board, Transportation Committee, and Veterans Affairs Officer.

In addition, the delegation heard reports from the Veterans Affairs Office, the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority (COMET), and a presentation by Midlands Technical College. They approved a funding request from the Department of Natural Resources to replace outdated equipment. They delayed approval of a new funding request from the Director of Parks and Recreation pending a report on the status of a project at the Colony Apartments that is already underway.

The Delegation elected officers for 2019. District 80 Representative Jimmy Bales was elected chair, and District 73 Representative Chris Hart was elected vice-chair. JR

[BACK TO TOP](#)



DOES MY VOTE COUNT? - A FORUM ON ELECTION REFORM

Richland Library, 1431 Assembly Street

Tuesday, January 22, 2019, 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Sponsored by

*The Richland County Public Library,
League of Women Voters of South Carolina
and League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area,
AARP of South Carolina,
Columbia Urban League.*

From legislative districts designed to protect incumbents to political campaigns awash in dark money, to broken or compromised voting machines – the American electorate is increasingly questioning whether their votes matter.

What is happening? How can public confidence be restored in our elections?

In the next year South Carolina will purchase a new voting system to replace the current aged-out system. What kind of system will ensure secure, accurate, transparent, and verifiable elections?

What can we do to shed light on who is trying to influence our votes?

Find out how proposed South Carolina legislation would require unbiased criteria and a non-partisan committee in charge of redrawing election district lines – instead of politicians drawing the lines and choosing their voters

Come to hear a panel of experts and legislators define these issues, and find out how citizens can equip themselves to demand fair election systems and practices.

Forum Participants:

Representative Beth Bernstein – SC House of Representatives, SC District 78

Duncan Buell, Ph.D. – Professor of Computer Science at the University of South Carolina and recognized expert on voting technology and security.

Representative Gary Clary – SC House of Representatives, SC District 3

Representative Kirkman Finlay – SC House of Representatives, SC District 75

Senator Mia McLeod – SC Senate, SC District 22.

John Ruoff, Ph.D. – Researcher and advocate, a recognized authority on voting rights and redistricting in South Carolina.

_JoAnne Day



SCANA, DOMINION, AND THE LEAGUE

Lynn S. Teague, LWVSC Vice President for Issues and Action, Columbia Area member

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has ruled on the rates that SCE&G can charge for the failed V. C. Summer nuclear reactors and on conditions associated with the buyout of parent company SCANA by Dominion. This is the latest major development in an issue that was brought to the attention of the state League in 2015 by knowledgeable members in Columbia. As a consequence, since 2015 the state League has been very involved in efforts to reform utility regulation in South Carolina. At the PSC, state League Vice President Lynn Teague intervened *pro se* (as in individual) in the dockets associated with V. C. Summer and the SCANA Dominion “business combination.” Our focus has been on government accountability and transparency in regulation, on ethics in government, and on constitutionally sound protection of the public interest.

The main thing that most will notice as a consequence of the PSC ruling is simply that rates will remain lower than SCE&G originally wanted to charge for their failed construction. They will remain near the rate established by the General Assembly this past year. Beyond that, the logo will change on our bills. However, the League saw this as an opportunity to address much broader issues.

At the PSC, Teague submitted testimony against the constitutionality of the Base Load Review Act (BLRA) that made V. C. Summer possible. Expert testimony was offered by beloved Columbia League member and constitutional law expert Sarah Leverette, at the time the only surviving member of the West Committee that amended the SC Constitution in the 1970’s. Sarah and her colleagues wisely chose to explicitly require that utilities be regulated “in the public interest.” She testified for the PSC that the provisions of the BLRA were incompatible with this provision because the BLRA deprived citizens of due process and made it almost impossible for citizens to challenge rate increases at V. C. Summer. Economic testimony was given by LWVSC Co-President Holley Ulbrich, who testified in her role as professional economist that the transfer of risk from shareholders to ratepayers in the BLRA invited catastrophe of precisely the kind that happened, again arguing against the law being in the public interest.

Beyond the PSC dockets, LWVSC has lobbied extensively at the General Assembly for reform of the regulatory system, with some successes and some failures. Columbia area Representative Kirkman Finlay of Columbia was the first legislator willing to take this on. Other Midlands legislators who were especially important in reforms were Senator Nikki Setzler of Lexington and Representative Russell Ott of Calhoun County. The progress of regulatory reform has been documented on the LWVSC Facebook page.

In summary, some have asked why the League got into this. The answer wasn’t to lower utility rates a bit. It has been, and it will continue to be, about accountable, transparent,

ethical government – bedrock issues of Making Democracy Work. We have had some success, although less than we would have wished. Like many other League issues, this is not a single rate case, but an ongoing need for responsible citizens to stay informed and act in the public interest.

CAN WE RATIFY THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT?

More at <https://puttinginmyshovel.blogspot.com/>

Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Democratic minority leader of the SC House, apparently knows the odds are against her in gaining approval to add the guarantee of women's rights to the US Constitution. In 1971, the US House of Representatives approved the amendment by a vote of 354-24. A year later the US Senate followed, voting 84-8 in favor. However, two Democrats, NC Senator Sam Erwin and NY Rep. Emanuel Celler, two old white guys, succeeded in attaching a seven-year ratification time limit, a seldom used caveat. Therein lies the challenge Cobb-Hunter must address.

During the latter stages of the ratification campaign, a student in my American National Government class at USC Spartanburg wrote a position paper on the ERA. She laid out the case that protections women enjoyed were legislatively granted and were not only limited in scope and application but could be withdrawn by congressional whim or narrowly interpreted by judges. Her arguments were so cogent, I became a supporter.

As for the ratification time limit, the 1992 decision of the US Congress to adopt the 27th Amendment, which had been pending before state legislatures since 1789, is sufficient precedent for removing the ERA's deadline. Two states recently ratified the amendment in anticipation of possible congressional action: Nevada in March, 2017, and Illinois in April, 2018.

For twenty years, South Carolina has been among the ten worse states for domestic violence; four times the worst. In 2016, the last year for which there are statistics, SC ranked sixth. How delightful it would be if SC were the state to push the Equal Rights Amendment over the top.

By [Olin Sansbury](#), via *Chester Sansbury*



FEELING OPTIMISTIC? Here is information about the Green New Deal:
http://www.gp.org/gnd_full

[BACK TO TOP](#)



PHOTO GALLERY HOLIDAY PARTY 2018

The smiling faces of some members and friends enjoying The League's Annual Holiday Bash!



Rita Paul and Joanne Day



Paul and Missy Caughman



Allison Terracio & Family & Co-host Pat Forbis



Candy Coon & Laura Wolliver



Co-host, Joel Duncan with Paul Caughman & Marianne and Jim McGrath





Lady June, Gladys and Allen Cole



Judy Thompson and Kitty Hepfer



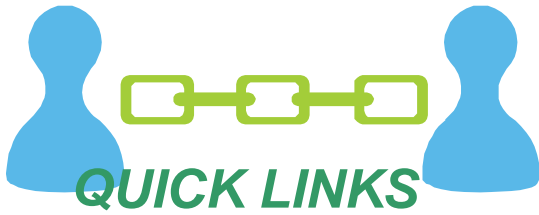
Rita Paul and Missy Caughman with Cynthia Flynn and Janie White



...AND A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL!



[BACK TO TOP](#)



Websites:

National: www.lwv.org/

State: <http://lwvsc.org/>

Columbia: www.lwvcolumbiasc.org

Facebook: *To see our Facebook Page:*

1. Go to YOUR Facebook page and begin typing "**League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area**" in the search box until a list pops up.
2. Click on the name **League of Women Voters of Columbia, SC** with the familiar blue LWV Logo on the left.


That's it!


Twitter:


1. Go to YOUR Twitter account and search for the League of Women Voters Columbia Area and connect.

Facebook and Twitter email address:
[@LWVColumbiaSC](https://twitter.com/LWVColumbiaSC)

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 **Columbia City Council**
 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 6:00 PM City Hall 1737 Main Street Columbia, SC 29201
 Check website at www.columbiasc.net for more information.

 **Lexington County Council**
 Meet: 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 4:30 PM 2nd Floor County Administration Building 212 South Lake Drive Lexington, SC 29072
 For confirmation of meeting dates, please call 785-8103 or check website www.lex-co.com

 **Richland County Council**
 Meet: 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 6:00 PM 2nd Floor County Administration Building 2020 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29202.
 For more information, please contact the Clerk of Council Office @ (803) 576-2060 or check: www.richlandonline.com

