

# League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area



## LEAGUE LINES

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### SPECIAL PRIMARY VOTING EDITION

ACTIVATE YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK - "Like" [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org)

YOU CAN HELP INCREASE VOTER PARTICIPATION IN THE PRIMARIES JUNE 12!

Volume: 70, Issue: 8

June 2018

### CALENDAR

**Sat., June 2 & 9, 9:00AM - 1:00PM**

VOTE411 at Soda City, Main Street

**Fri., June 8, 5:00 PM** Deadline to apply for absentee by mail ballot for Primaries

**Tue., June 12, 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM**

Statewide Primaries

**Tues., June 26, 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM**

Primary Runoffs

**Thurs. - Sun., June 28 - July 1**

National Convention in Chicago

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### VIEW FROM RIVERS' EDGE

Janelle Rivers

A friend who isn't a League member told me that he had noticed our launch of VOTE411.org in the Midlands on May 22. He was so impressed with the power of the software that he alerted a candidate who had not yet submitted responses. My friend warned the candidate that potential voters are taking notice of who responds and who does not.



If you know candidates who have not entered information on VOTE411, let them know that you've noticed their failure to take advantage of this free opportunity to communicate with potential voters! That's the message for candidates.

There's a different message for the rest of your friends. The League of Women Voters has done much of their homework assignment—all the way down to the non-partisan local elections and the advisory questions for the primaries. Yes, VOTE411 is a one-stop shop that can take voters to the official voter registration site and the other information that's been available on scvotes.org. **What makes VOTE411 new and especially valuable is that it allows voters to**

**compare what all the candidates on the ballot say about themselves and their stances on important issues.** If a candidate fails to enter information, I think it's fair to make an inference about that candidate's desire to be responsive to voters.

The VOTE411 software is valuable because it filters based on the address that is entered and then creates a personalized summary that organizes candidate information all the way down to the local level. Based on the address that is entered (which could even be the address of a nearby public building for voters who might be concerned about privacy), VOTE411 provides a sample ballot showing what the voter can expect to see at the polls. Voters can also opt to send themselves a summary, with or without recording their preferences.

What makes the software worth using is the work that League members do in presenting the candidates with relevant questions and providing instructions and support to let candidates enter their responses themselves. That gives candidates a free unedited platform to communicate with their voters.

Three patriotic cheers for each of the League members who has put time and energy into making this happen! The work you've done truly embodies the spirit of the national League's new mission statement, "Empowering voters. Defending democracy!"



**VOTE 411 PROJECT LAUNCHED - WE MADE A SPLASH!** VOTE411.org was officially launched at the Richland County Main Library, Tuesday, May 22. Fifteen candidates participated, as well as representatives from diverse organizations: Transitions, AARP, The South Carolina State Library,



*Keller Barron*

the League. The entry of the 71 candidates, management of the data, and all things associated

Aids Healthcare Foundation, Black Voters Matter/SC, Voto Latino, SC Republican Party, Richland County GOP, and SC Appleseed. They were welcomed in the Business, Career and Research Classroom by Lady June Cole, Katie DuBose, Susan James, Elizabeth Jones, Lauren Wilkie, and Suffragist Sharon Ayling.

All 18 seats at the computers were full as Janelle Rivers and Christina Goodwin demonstrated how to enter your address to find your ballot and responses from candidates to questions posed by

with the site are handled expertly by Melissa Augsburger with assistance from Megan Brown, LWVUS and Barbara Zia, LWVSC.



Interest was generated by the VOTE411 committee. Janelle and Keller met with Cindi Ross Scoppe, who authored an insightful "Opinion" in *The State*. Dr. Curtis Rogers, Director of Information, State Library, sent electronic posters to the 184 libraries in the state and to academic partners. Rosemary Greco assisted the Committee in telephone calls to all the candidates to encourage participation. Anne Mellen drove 177 miles all over Lexington County to distribute bookmarks to the 10 libraries in Lexington County. Ellen Yaghjian

*Christina Goodwin Janelle Rivers*

arranged for distribution to the libraries in Richland County. Elizabeth Jones drove 77 miles to deliver posters and bookmarks to the colleges and universities. Debbie Dickinson wrote the news releases; and she, Lauren Wilkie, and Anne Sinclair contacted media. WIS/NBC and *The Columbia Star* covered the presentation. What a Team! *Keller Barron, VOTE411.org, Chair*



**PRIMARIES AREN'T for WIMPS - Cindi-Ross Scoppe in *The State Newspaper* on Vote411:**

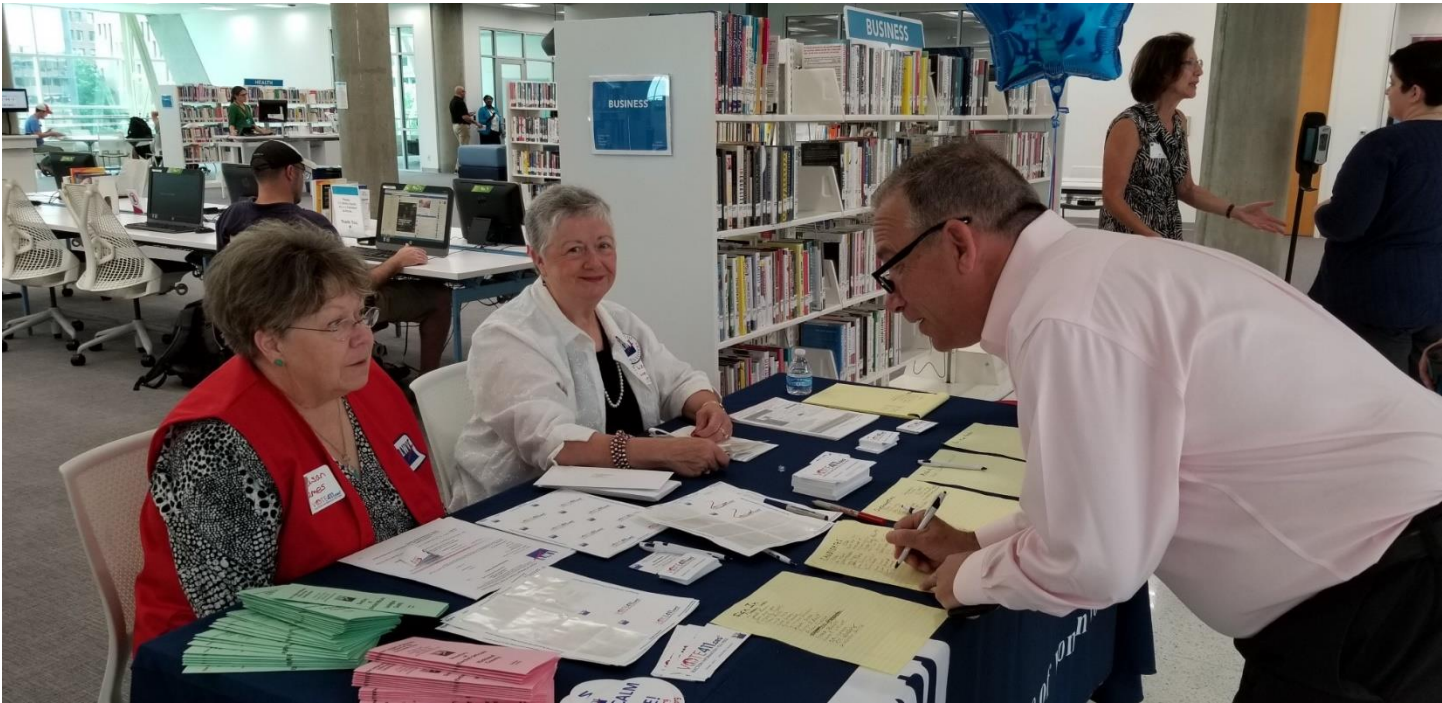
"I'm particularly glad the League is doing this because I had decided I couldn't justify the time it took me in the past few elections to cajole candidates in selected contests into completing similar questionnaires; I was feeling guilty about that, even though I'm not convinced that a lot of people actually read the candidates' responses. ...If you're a thoughtful voter, [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) won't give you enough information to make a decision. But it's a good starting place, and the best one-stop-shop around. Particularly on down-ballot races, it might give you more information than

*Katie DuBose* you'll find anywhere else." <http://www.thestate.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/cindi-ross-scoppe/article211632404.html>

"So far this year, over 325,000 individuals have visited the [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org) website nationally. There are a total of 71 candidates running for political office in Richland and Lexington counties." *Anita Baker in *The Columbia Star*.* [http://www.thecolumbiastar.com/news/2018-05-](http://www.thecolumbiastar.com/news/2018-05-25/Front Page/League of Women Voters of the Columbia area announ.html)

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*Susan James*

*Elizabeth Jones*



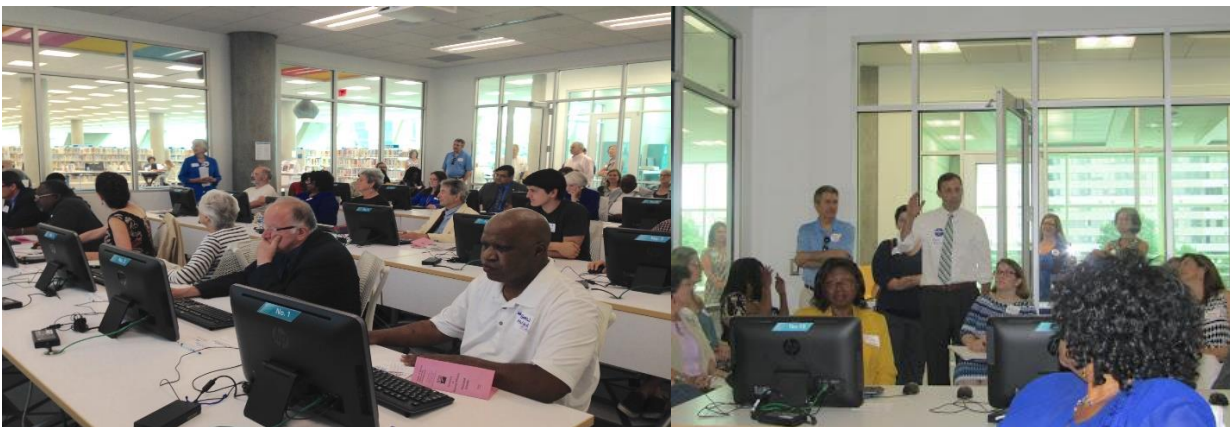
Candidates Left to Right: John Crangle District 75, Byron Gipson 5<sup>th</sup> circuit solicitor, Leon Howard House District 76, Sean Carrigan 2<sup>ND</sup> Congressional District, Chakisse Newton RC District 11, Beth Ann Rocheleau House District 69, Kirkland Smith for James Smith Governor, Sharon Ayling Suffragist, Norman Jackson RC District 11, Sonny Narang 2<sup>nd</sup> Congrerssional District, Janelle Rivers President LWV of Columbia Area, Diane Summers House District 87, Charles Crouch Lex District 8, Sam Edwards Lex District 85, John McClenic House District 77, Allison Terracio RC District 5, Will Brennan RC District 5.

**UPDATE ON VOTING MACHINES:** *Note - The following is a summary of Duncan Buell’s presentation at the Annual Meeting, which stimulated lively follow-up discussions. He will keep us informed as the Election Commission and the Legislature move forward.*

The current Election Systems & Software (ES&S) election system (iVotronic voting computers and the Unity software package for county headquarters) was purchased by South Carolina between 2004 and 2006 using federal funds from the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). These computers are now getting quite old by technology standards. South Carolina is looking for replacements, as are many other states. The State Election Commission (SEC) has repeatedly asked the legislature for escrow funds totaling \$40 million for a replacement system. In a recent *State* newspaper article, that number was given as \$50 million. **Comparisons with bids and contracts from other states would seem to suggest that a new election system could be acquired for about half that.** Estimates based on bids to Ohio and Michigan and previous estimates for Iowa would put the cost at about \$20 to \$25 million (after adjusting for numbers of voters and numbers of machines purchased.) Given the difference, League members are encouraged to discuss this with citizens and legislators.

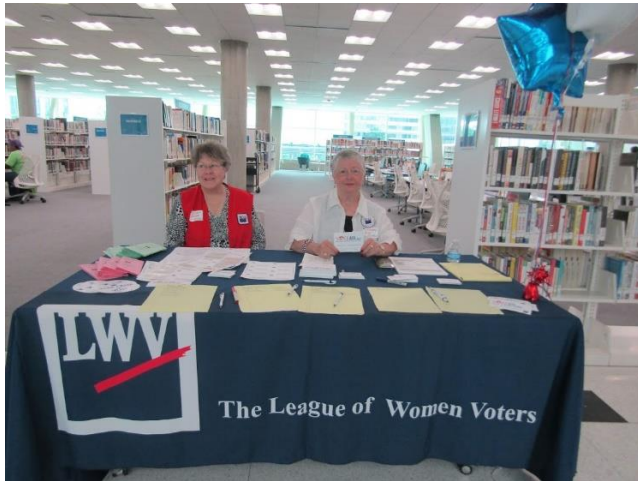
Apparently a number of SC county election directors would like to return to voter-marked paper ballots and optical scanners. The new technology from many vendors is for a ballot-marking-device (BMD) that provides touch screen for the voter but prints a paper “ballot” that is then scanned.

One point of contention is that all BMDs seem to count votes on a bar code, not based on the English text the voter sees. **In the absence of robust audits to compare bar codes against the text, this means that the counting of votes is still done by software that is not transparent to the voter.** And unfortunately, South Carolina does not seem to be planning to follow the lead of several other states and require robust post-election statistical audits. *Duncan Buell*



Business, Career and Research Classroom





Susan James

Elizabeth Jones



Sharon Ayling

Lady June Cole







ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED

Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) in October of 2006, VOTE411.org is a "one-stop-shop" for election related information. It provides nonpartisan information to the public with both general and state-specific information on the following aspects of the election process:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Absentee ballot information</li> <li>✓ Ballot measure information (where applicable)</li> <li>✓ Early voting options (where applicable)</li> <li>✓ Election dates</li> <li>✓ Factual data on candidates in various federal, state and local races</li> <li>✓ General information on such topics as how to watch debates with a critical eye</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ ID requirements</li> <li>✓ Polling place locations</li> <li>✓ Registration deadlines</li> <li>✓ Voter qualifications</li> <li>✓ Voter registration forms</li> <li>✓ Voting machines</li> </ul> |
|---|---|



**MEMBER CORNER:** Beverly Ozburn, former LWV member, passed away on May 9 due to congestive heart failure and other complications. She was born on November 3, 1928. Her daughter, Ann Ozburn, also a former member, wished to inform the members of the League because they did not place an announcement in the newspaper's obituaries. The family is at 25 Cedar Field Court, Columbia, SC 29212-2810. There will be a celebration of life ceremony at the Virginia Wingard United Methodist Church, 1500 Broad River Road, June 23 at 2 PM.

**OBSERVER CORPS UPDATE REGARDING RICHLAND COUNTY COUNCIL:** Problems with County Council have been particularly concerning. The presence of our observers at least brings some degree of transparency to processes that have been controversial and highly problematic. The League is grateful to members who have been faithfully observing County Council and other government meetings. Below is an abbreviated summary of notes from our observers. The issues are complex, and much of what has happened has been in executive sessions. Members who want more detail are referred to investigative reporting by *The State* newspaper, especially including minutes of meetings and online streaming of meetings.

(<http://www.thestate.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/cindi-ross-scope/article211262779.html> )

### **Richland County Council**

March 20, 2018

Dale Baer

During item 9a, FY2017 CAFR (annual financial report) revisions, County Administrator Gerald Seals stated that the revisions were necessitated by bank accounts unexpectedly found. It seems that constitutional officers elected county-wide have bank accounts over which the county has no control, yet are included in county financial reports. Mr. Seals thinks all the accounts have been found.

### **Richland County Council**

April 3, 2018, Regular Meeting

Barbara Beeler

Issues were Penny Tax, Huger Street, and Termination of County Administrator. Executive session items included an employee grievance; a contractual matter regarding a property purchase; legal advice regarding enhanced trigger devices; legal advice regarding some state litigation; updates regarding the Department of Revenue litigation (Penny Tax Supreme Court Decision); and personnel matters with no outside council.

Citizen Input came from a citizen from the Cedar Cove and Stoney Point Sewer area (Lake Murray) regarding the county's plans to improvements to the sewer system requiring the homeowners to install grinders which they feel is unduly burdensome. They asked that the council consider other less burdensome options. RCC voted to absorb the cost of the items, citing that the excessive cost was due to issues caused by the county and out of the control of the citizens relating to technical circumstances. This decision would affect about 140-200 homeowners.

Dr. Yudice introduced Lee Mashburn/ Mashburn Construction Company who had been selected by the RFP/procurement process to develop the Columbia Place Mall part of the Renaissance Project. Mashburn would have responsibility to control cost and maintain a budget for the entire project.

*NOTE: Critical to understanding the county's plans and oversight is understanding that the county is doing this on a "design a design and build" contract, rather than a "bid, design, bid build" contract. Proponents of "design and build" believe that it is faster and more cost effective than the traditional method in which the owner obtains separate bids/contracts for each subcontractor.*

The issue of hiring a person to facilitate the planned Council Workshop on Transportation related to the management of a court decision related to the Penny Tax resulted in a prolonged discussion. The Council postponed the workshop and required the administrator to justify the need for such an expenditure.

In discussion of the Report of the Administration & Finance Committee, Mr. N Jackson clarified that the motion did not give the administrator permission to purchase additional property or make decisions without input and approval of full Council. A motion was placed by Mr. N Jackson to terminate the employment of Mr. Gerald Seals, the county administrator, and name Mr. Brendon Madden to assume those duties until the RCC hires a new administrator. There was prolonged discussion and debate. After the resolution of some parliamentary difficulties, the council then voted 6/5 in favor of terminating Mr. Seals as stated above. Several dissenting members expressed their feelings.

The sale of the 1326-1400 Huger Street property was deferred until the next regular RCC meeting because the city of Columbia has not yet voted on their zoning of this property for student housing.

### **Richland County Council**

April 9, 2018, Called Meeting

Barbara Beeler

The RCC sought to resolve a problem that the terminated the county administrator was subsequently informed that state law required a procedure that was not followed. The Council went into executive session with a consultant attorney. Subsequently, the Council affirmed their decision to terminate the county administrator.

### **Richland County Council**

April 17, 2018, Called meeting

Dale Baer

The associate administrator, Dr. Sandra Yudice, received a vote of affirmation. A lengthy executive session was held about the firing of the County Administrator. Problems with feral cats are still under discussion.

### **Richland County Council Administration and Finance Committee**

April 24, 2018

Barbara Beeler

Topics included Renaissance Bond Anticipation Notes, funding of improvements for Magistrates' offices, and discussion of strategy for managing Recreational Commission Funds. The committee recommended moving a magistrate's office to a new location. The Home Rule law has led to more



controversy over collection and use of funds for recreational purposes. Council members N. Jackson and Myers disagreed as to how property in the Hopkins area should be used. The committee recognized space and revenue problems related to recreational activities and discussed the possibility of a basketball complex in the Southeast and a baseball complex in the Northeast.

**Richland County Council**

May 1, 2018, Regular Meeting

Dale Baer & Barbara Beeler

The council had not received information concerning the new judicial center which forced delay of moving on the project. There was confusion about Renaissance Project bonds, and the meeting went on for several hours.

**Richland County Council**

May 15, 2018

Dale Baer & Barbara Beeler

During public input, a speaker asked for answers to questions about the \$1 million settlement for Mr. Seals for wrongful termination. As is customary, the Council did not provide a response to this citizen's inquiry. Dr. Yudice stated that moving bond money out of escrow would result in a savings. The motion passed after much discussion