



LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

# SUFFRAGETTE

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## *Women's History Month*

Since 1995, Presidents have proclaimed March as Women's History Month, celebrating women's roles in history and society. President Carter first proclaimed Women's History Week in 1980, which was to include International Women's Day of March 8, a decades-old designation.

Women who have inspired members of the LWV of Charlotte-Mecklenburg will be in the spotlight at the **March 11 Lunch with the League**, along with dramatic and inspirational presentations celebrating Women's History Month. Watch for an e-vite with details.

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## Lillian Exum Clement Stafford

Before she could vote, Lillian became the first woman elected to General Assembly

By Suzanne Elsberry Schweikert

During National Women's History Month, it is gratifying to recall that a North Carolina woman, Lillian Exum Clement Stafford, holds the distinction of having been the first female elected to serve in any southern state legislature. Lillian prevailed over two male opponents in her 1920 Democratic primary election by an astonishing vote count of 10,368-41, and was ultimately elected to the NC State House. This is all the more incredible since she was elected before ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which, of course, granted women the right to vote.

This remarkable woman was born in 1894 near Black Mountain, North Carolina. Lillian moved with her family to Asheville as a young teenager where her father worked on the construction of the Biltmore House.



In Asheville, she studied law under two local attorneys while simultaneously performing as deputy in the office of the county sheriff for 13 years.

Unquestionably a woman of firsts, Lillian, having passed the bar in 1917, established a private legal practice, something no other North Carolina woman had done before her. While practicing law for a period of four years, Lillian garnered a reputation as a brilliant and talented criminal attorney. She also earned herself a career-long nickname from one of the judges, that of "Brother Exum."

Lillian was 26 when she traveled to Raleigh to begin her term in the North Carolina House of Representatives in January, 1921. Soon after being elected a State Representative, Lillian became a bride, marrying a newspaper journalist at the *Asheville Citizen*, E. Eller Stafford.

When asked about herself by a newspaper reporter, the new legislator replied that she sought "...to blaze a trail for other women." As a trailblazer, Lillian added "I know that years from now there will be many other women in politics, but you have to start a thing." She was correct in her prediction. Two Charlotte women followed in Lillian's legislative trail: Julia Alexander in 1925 and Carrie McLean two years later.

Never one to sit idle or to serve as a token female, "Brother Exum" was responsible for the introduction of 17 bills during her one-year tenure---many of which were successful. Three examples of her legislative successes were The Clement Bill which advocated privacy in voting (booths) and a secret ballot; a bill to aid abandoned wives by reducing their required wait before suing for divorce (from 10 to 5 years); and the Pure Milk Bill which mandated tuberculin testing of cows on dairy farms and sanitation in dairy barns.

The young legislator's most challenging undertaking was advocating for the Lindley Training School, a home for unwed mothers and delinquent girls, to come under the auspices of the State. The idea was not well

received by the citizenry, and, at a public meeting in Asheville, she was actually pelted with refuse. In true fashion, Lillian did not let this sway her determination, and the project came to a successful conclusion after a long battle.

Having decided against a second term in the General Assembly, Lillian was appointed by Governor Morrison to the position of Director of the North Carolina State Hospital located in Morganton. In 1925, following two years of deteriorating health, Exum Clement died of pneumonia at 31 years of age and was interred in Asheville. Both the NC House and Senate issued resolutions of regret upon her death.

In 1998, Lillian's List was established to help Democratic women win public office. This organization selected its name in honor of Lillian Exum Clement Stafford, North Carolina's first woman legislator.

*Information in this article was compiled from the following sources: Kellie Slappy, North Carolina History Project: Lillian Exum Clement (1894-1925); Public Libraries News, Buncombe County North Carolina: Lillian E. C. Stafford Exhibit Photographic Display; Text, NC State Historical Marker: Lillian Exum Clement Stafford. Charlotte Street at College Street, Asheville, NC, USA*

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## Another League member Joins the General Assembly in 2015

**Sen. Joyce Waddell**, elected to the NC General Assembly in November, 2014, is a long-time member of the League of Women Voters of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Serving her first term in the NC Senate, she represents District 40, an area shaped like a travel pillow with jagged edges, generally winding to the north, east and slightly south of center city.



Previously, Sen. Waddell had served as the District 3 representative on the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education for five years and had a 21-year career with the school system prior to that. Born in Myrtle Beach, SC, Sen. Waddell started her higher education at South Carolina State, holds three masters degrees and received her PhD at UNC Greensboro. She is also a graduate of the LWV Civics 101.

Sen. Waddell plans to focus on education, jobs, health care and women's issues in the 2015 legislative session. All lead to "strengthening families," she pointed out. "Strong families" are necessary for a strong economy. "Absolutely," she answered, when asked about her support for League issues of Medicaid expansion and reinstatement of the EITC.

Contact her at: N. C. Senate, 300 N. Salisbury St., Room 515, Raleigh, NC 27603-5925, 919-733-6350  
[Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.net](mailto:Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.net)

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## Suffragettes used Valentines to support their cause

from the *Palczewski Suffrage Postcard Archive* / [uni.edu](http://uni.edu) / Via [lww.org](http://lww.org)



# League Legislative Issues

Several issues are on the front burner for League action in the 2015 legislative session. Peg Chapin and Mary Klenz serve as advocacy leaders for the LWVNC and will be leading efforts to contact legislators and educate them about the League positions. A well-organized state-wide offensive has been launched to get Medicaid expanded and use NC tax money for North Carolina citizens needing health care coverage. This effort is described in detail by Karen Bean.

Also high on the League agenda are reinstatement of the Earned Income Tax Credit for working families, education funding and teacher raises, fair elections, protection of voters, timely disclosure of campaign contributions and immigration.

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## Medicaid Expansion - Closing the Coverage Gap in North Carolina by Karen Bean

Dana, a North Carolinian stricken with Multiple Sclerosis at the age of 22, struggled for years to find affordable health insurance and was delighted when the Affordable Care Act (ACA) enabled individuals with pre-existing conditions to obtain coverage (<http://ncleftmeout.org>). However, because of her low-income level, she was disqualified from receiving subsidies to purchase insurance in the ACA Marketplace. ACA enrollees have annual incomes that fall between 100% and 400% of the Federal Poverty Level. Dana is one of 500,000 people in NC whose income falls below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level, but cannot receive Medicaid, cannot have subsidies, and cannot afford health insurance. These individuals have fallen into the health care coverage gap due to NC's rejection of Medicaid expansion funding.

Initial ACA legislation mandated states to expand Medicaid to cover low-income residents, but the Supreme Court rejected this mandate and allowed states to opt out of Medicaid expansion. Dana would have been eligible for Medicaid dollars, but North Carolina legislators declined to join the majority of states in expanding Medicaid, leaving 500,000 residents without access to health insurance. In addition to the inhumane denial of coverage to our neediest citizens, it is also an economic travesty for all citizens of North Carolina. A recent county-by-county study determined that, by declining funding, NC is losing \$4.9 million a day in health coverage, jobs, and economic growth. ([www.lwvnc.org](http://www.lwvnc.org) > Issues for Emphasis > Health Care > *The Economic and Employment Costs of Not Expanding Medicaid in NC*) (See the real-time tax dollar loss for North Carolina at this website.)

This declined federal funding, from tax dollars that *we are already paying*, is going to states who accepted Medicaid expansion. Without Medicaid expansion, many hospitals and clinics in our poorest counties will not survive because government subsidies for treating indigent patients have been discontinued. North Carolina is losing existing and potential new jobs as well as human lives.

NC Justice Center selected LWVNC and NC Community Health Centers to participate in a grant to engage elected officials and civic and community groups to present convincing evidence to the Governor and the NC Legislators that "closing the gap" is not only the right thing to do but will greatly benefit NC financially.

**Add your voice** to this effort during **League Persuasion Week** (week of March 30) in which action alerts will be sent to League members. The goal is to harness the power of local Leagues to advocate for Medicaid expansion for NC! For more information on contacting legislators, contact Karen Bean at [beank@bellsouth.net](mailto:beank@bellsouth.net).

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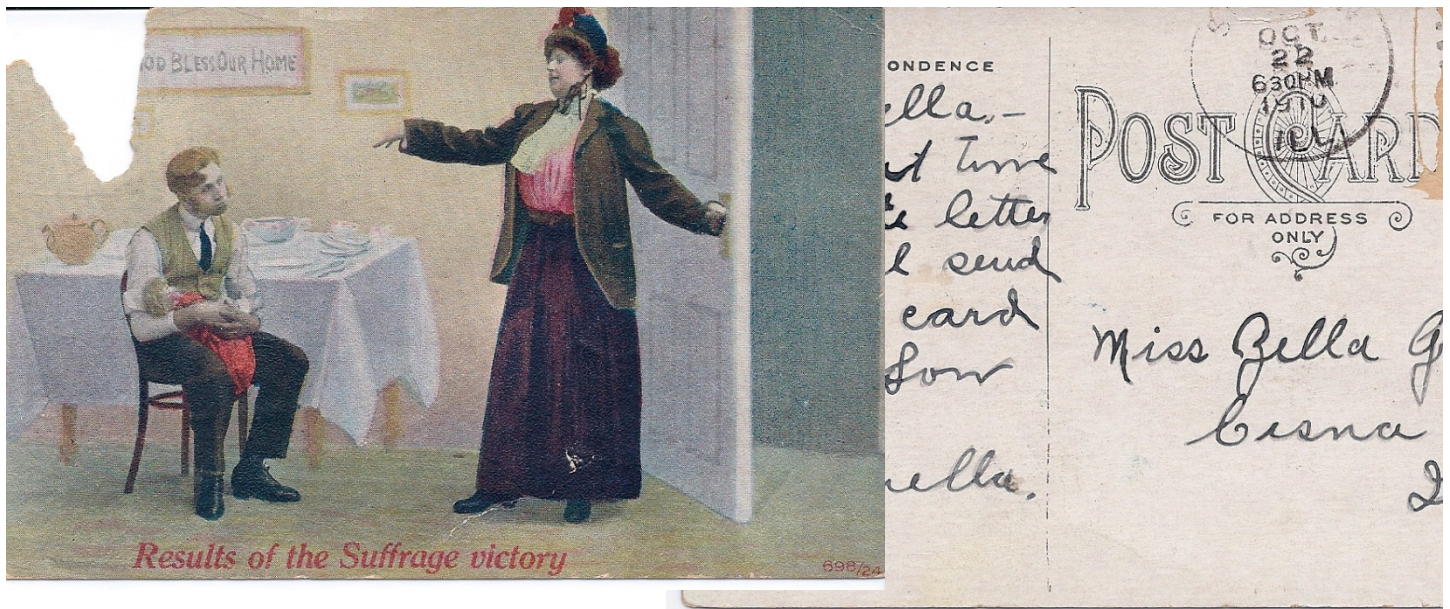
## Idea Summit to Address Anti-Sex Trafficking Action Rescheduled for April 25



Sex trafficking is a complex problem that requires creative solutions and we need **YOU** to participate in a facilitated session in which we collectively discuss the issue and ideas for advocacy and action. We will use the World Café Model to generate ideas for how our local League can advocate to end trafficking. This promises to be a fun and social way to tackle a serious and complex issue.

Watch for more information about this Idea Summit on April 25, 9-noon at the LWVC-M Center, 1817 Central Ave.





Postcard with Oct. 22, 1910 postmark.

*This issue of the Suffragette is a publication of the membership committee, Suzanne Elsberry Schweikert, chair, and edited by Lucille Howard*

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