



VOTER

League of Women Voters

League of Women Voters of Charlotte-Mecklenburg

January-February 2018

REACHING LWV-CM

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Find updates for League action and activities at

goleaguego.org

Leaguers braved extreme cold to support the Silent Protest against judiciary changes. See p. 6

Calls to Action

TUESDAY, JAN. 9—Support the LWVCM Education Committee's advocacy for improving equity in the schools

Where: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education meeting at the Government Center, 600 East Fourth Street. Park in Government Center Garage, 232 So. Davidson St.

When: Jan. 9, 6 pm (get there early to get a seat)

The Plan: three speakers will talk about the statistical findings of the League study showing significant correlation between high needs schools and lower achievement levels and lower student growth and make suggestions for changing these outcomes.

What you can do: Stand up when called upon to show support for the League's statement about promoting equity and establishing a new Board Equity Committee. For more information, Helene Hilger hilger@uncc.edu
If you want, make a sign (8X11 is fine) saying so.

SATURDAY, Jan. 13—Walk in Martin Luther King Parade to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and increase awareness of League efforts to further his democratic principles

Where: Parade starts at Hal Marshall Center at 9th & Tryon and proceeds on Tryon to Stonewall St.

When: Jan. 13, 10 am.

What you can do: Meet at the Hal Marshall Center at 9:30 am and walk beside and behind the League's decorated car. Call Debbie Snowdon at 704-975-4335 if you can march to learn details on where and when to meet beforehand.

SATURDAY, Jan. 20—LWVCM Co-sponsors 2018 Women's March with Remarkable Women

Where: First Ward Park for speakers including our own **President Delores Hurt**, then march to Romare Bearden Park. First Ward Park is at Seventh and Brevard Sts. Bearden Park is at First and Church Sts.

When: Jan. 20, 10 am for speakers; March starts at noon.

The Plan: "The League was founded on the fight for women's rights. It is important that we participate in the anniversary of the historic display of female power exemplified by the Women's March of 2017 - and continued as women's voices were heard in the #MeToo Movement." —Delores Hurt

What you can do: Meet at First Ward Park, look for LWV signs to walk with other League members. If you can, bring a sign about the League and/or women's issues. For more info: call Delores Hurt 980-355-0054.

Coming Events

Robert Dawkins Headlines League Lunch Wednesday, Jan. 10, 11:30 am

Robert Dawkins, founder and state organizer for the SAFE Coalition, will speak to League members Jan. 10 about building public trust and accountability in NC law enforcement. The meeting is at the League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave., Rm. 210, and is open to the public.

Begun in 2013 to promote police accountability, **SAFE stands for Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity**. The group also advocates for criminal justice reform and issues that will help build safe, sustainable communities.

SAFE Coalition is made up of over 15 community-based advocacy groups working to end discriminatory profiling and promote civil liberty protections for all North Carolina residents. SAFE Coalition NC's advocates are victims of police and neighborhood violence, concerned residents and allied organizations. It is organized to promote police accountability as well as criminal justice reform, the re-enfranchisement of people previously convicted and an end to community violence. Its goal is to build safe, sustainable communities that are not reliant on government intervention or law enforcement to become united and strong.

According to Mr. Dawkins, SAFE believes that change will be won through leadership development, community dialogue, direct action and grassroots organizing.

Mr. Dawkins was the Western NC field organizer for Democracy North Carolina for seven years before starting SAFE. He was the Head Organizer for the Charlotte chapter of ACORN for three years where he worked in low to moderate income neighborhoods building neighborhood capacity, power and leadership.

He has a B.A in Political Science from the University of South Carolina, a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management from the University of North Carolina Charlotte and is currently working on his M.A in Social Justice at Loyola University Chicago.

Mr. Dawkins serves as a board member for Action NC, and he has been the recipient of the Bill of Right's Defense Committee's Patriot Award, The Black Workers for Justice's Self Determination Award and The United House of Prayer's Trendsetter Award for his work on police accountability.



East Mecklenburg High School Student Presentation February 20 League Talk, 6:30 pm

Unified: A Political Harmony Seminar

February League Talk:

An interactive event promoting discussion and debate by League members, role-play, and video put on by high school students concerned about the passion/venom displayed after last year's general election.

League Talk starts at 6:30 pm at the League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave., Rm. 200.



The main exercise is slated to feature discussion questions that will allow the audience to talk to people with a variety of political values and discuss divisions that can result from them.

Board Reflection/Look Forward Meeting

Jan. 22, 10 am League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave., #200
Looking at successes and challenges of the past year and considering plans for the new year.
All members welcome.

SAVE THE DATE
LWVCM ANNUAL
MEETING
JUNE 7, 6 PM

EDUCATION ADVOCACY

The LWVCM Education Committee is tackling these urgent issues currently: **School Equity**

A wide-ranging study by the committee using Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools data confirms the significant correlation between high needs schools and lower achievement levels as well as lower student growth. The study and League recommendations will be presented formally to the School Board Tuesday, Jan. 9. **See p. 1.** The full study "Important Statistical Trends in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools: A Comparison of Schools By Percent SES Composition" can be accessed [here](#).

NC Grading System

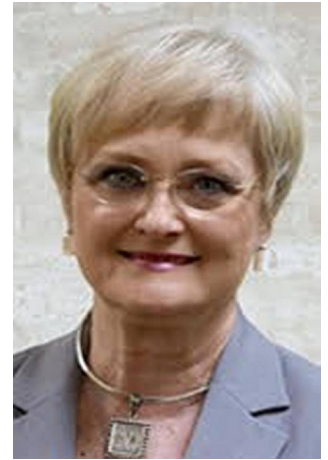
Cheryl Milam wrote a Special to the Observer published Dec. 18 on "Why Your Kid's School May Go From a "C" to an "F" with the 2018 change of the criteria for grading schools.

She wrote **"The change that the North Carolina General Assembly has made in how N.C. public and charter schools are ranked in 2018 is a disaster waiting to happen – and it's entirely avoidable."**

Cheryl, a former school administrator, also lamented the low credit given for growth in student performance as part of the score.

She declared "Nothing will have changed in your child's school – just this arbitrary scale. For a legislature that purports to be leading the way for business development and improving our standard of living, this misguided effort to "improve" schools will only result in shooting ourselves in the foot."

Read the full column [here](#).



Cheryl Milam

School Funding

Following work on voter approval of the record-breaking CMS bond issue, the Funding Subcommittee continues to monitor the Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Finance Reform which is reviewing the formulas used to allot funds to local school systems. Changes being considered will have tremendous impact on CMS.

There's More:

Class Size Changes

The Legislature's 2017 mandate to lower class size in lower elementary grades without providing additional funds to school systems for more teachers and classroom space is causing an uproar across the state. Members are writing letters to the editor and to legislators demanding a delay in implementation until appropriate plans can be made.

Charter School District

Education committee members are warily watching legislative consideration of permitting the cities of Matthews and Mint Hill to create their own charter schools. According to CMS governmental liaison Charles Jeter, "It's a seismic change in the education policy of this state." He told the *Charlotte Observer* that the bill sponsored by state Rep. Bill Brawley "would let towns that are whiter and more affluent than the county at large use property tax money to create separate public schools for their residents. . .We believe that this is a resegregation of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools."

Education Committee

Led by chair **Helene Hilger**, the next meetings will be held Wednesday, Jan. 24. Equity, 11:30 am; Innovations, 12:30 pm and the full committee, 1:30 pm. Contact Helene at hhilger@uncc.edu to join.

The committee's program on Pre-K education will be given at the March League Lunch, Mar. 14.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

After you get back from the Jan. 9 school board meeting, write to your NC legislators to express your opinion about their actions regarding school funding, class sizes and school grading. Addresses [here](#).

Voter Service



Tricia Garcia hands out Vote411 material to be distributed throughout Charlotte in Nov.

Youth Voter Registration

LWVCM received another award (this one of \$700 from the LWV Education Fund for 2018) to fund voter registration activities at some Charlotte public high schools in the spring of 2018. Voter Service Director **Marian Silverman** plans a January meeting to set up coverage for the selected high schools, enter voter contact data into a database and send "reminder to vote" postcards for the primary and general elections. She will be working with **Layna Hong** (East Meck HS) on her senior community service project to register youth voters at her school.

Boosting Voter Turnout with Vote411 and many PR efforts

Off-year elections, like the 2017 September primary and November general elections are traditionally very low turnout. Therefore, League efforts to raise voter interest should get some (a lot of?) credit for a turnout in Mecklenburg County 4.5 percentage points higher than the state as a whole and 2.5 points higher than the election four years ago.

2017 was the first time LWVCM, under the leadership of **Beth Springston**, used the site Vote411 for a municipal election to provide a local voter guide. For both the primary and general elections, candidates for Charlotte Mayor, City Council and School Board races answered League questions and provided biographical information.

With a grant from BlueprintNC, Beth printed bookmarks, magnets, balloons, and placed some advertising. Several social media postings promoted the information and voting. The League partnered with DemocracyNC on a print version of the information for the general election.

Did it make a difference?

Out of all the Vote411 users in the state, 34% were from Mecklenburg County. Since the county is just under 10% of the state population, that certainly looks like our PR efforts paid off.

A big vote of thanks goes to all the volunteers who helped. **Barbara Bleiweis** spearheaded the effort to get the word out by having tables at events and handing out bookmarks. **Mary Kaczmarek** gathered volunteers the last week before the general election who handed out thousands of bookmarks in uptown Charlotte. **Debbie Snowdon** organized the Labor Day Parade and got us marching with Vote411 banners. **Marcia Arnholt**, **Tom Bowers** and **Ann Wood** made lots of phone calls reminding candidates to respond.

Beth is working with LWVNC on a plan for 2018 to increase the visibility of Vote411 statewide.

The 2018 state primary is May 8, so work will be starting on Vote411 in February. Volunteers will be needed to help contact candidates to get their information in. That's something you can do from home on your schedule. Contact Beth Springston at bethspr@gmail.com



Mary Klenz and Tom Bowers, in costume, with Margaret Soper-Howe at Hwy. 51 on Hallow-

To contact League leaders to volunteer and/or make comments, go to <http://goleaguego.org/contact.html> to send an email message.

In League

President's Message

Happy New Year!

I expect 2018 to be full of new opportunities and challenges.



Delores Hurt

Thank you for renewing your memberships, giving financially beyond your dues, and attending Lunch with the League, League Talk and other League events. Thanks also for writing letters to the editor, lobbying, marching, conducting educational forums for the public and discussing issues important to the League with

family and friends.

This year, we'll continue to advocate for equitable schools, fair elections, an independent judiciary and a high turnout at the polls - especially important during the mid-term elections! We'll continue to register new citizens at the Naturalization Services in Charlotte and at area high schools. We'll co-sponsor more events with non-partisan, progressive organizations in Charlotte Mecklenburg. We'll continue our very popular Civics 101 program.

It would be wonderful if some of you can attend the LWVUS National Convention in late June/early July in Chicago!

Thanks for all you do and will do this year!
Cheers, Delores

MEMBERSHIP, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (MLD)

Sometime in your League life you may hear the initials **MLD**. It stands for **Membership and Leadership Development** and involves coaching offered to local Leagues to help them increase membership and to identify and promote new leaders in the group.

North Carolina Leagues found that coaching, which began for some groups in 2006 with a Shur Fellows grant, did help increase membership--even before the onslaught of new members after the 2016 election.

During conference calls, usually monthly, coaches employ the techniques of appreciative inquiry and active listening by asking leading questions that lead to solutions or rethinking about League issues. Coaches emphasize the use of "best practices" to attract and retain members as well as to identify and groom potential leaders.

Explanations of best practices are offered by LWVUS in Guidances which detail suggestions for carrying out such League activities as voter registration, nominating officers and selecting issues to study. The Guidances can be accessed at LWV.org by anyone interested in such topics.

Welcome New Members

Reita Pendry
Harvey Wood

SEEKING POTENTIAL NOMINEES

Linda Levy, 2018 Nominating Committee Chair

Would you like to work with a group of dedicated, informed, "can-do" people in setting priorities and direction for the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg?

If you're thinking along positive lines, the 2018 nominating committee wants to hear from you!

The nominating committee presents a slate of officers and directors for approval at the LWVCM annual meeting, this year on June 7.

Serving on the League Board of Directors is a "hands-on" experience in democratic leadership, where existing skills are enhanced and opportunities for learning new skills are presented.

If you are interested in serving or want to suggest a League member for this role, contact Linda Levy, at 704/366-6362 or levyollie@aol.com.



Member News

Ashleigh Morgan and Debbie Snowdon are the new co-chairs of LWVCM Fair Elections Committee which continues to work on legislative and judicial gerrymandering issues.

Vashti Hurt was the recipient of the Thereasea C. Elder Trailblazer Award 2017—Visionary Honoree. She is founder and Editor -In-Chief of Carolina Blitz, co-host of Game Over with Vashti and Sharona on Yahoo Sports Radio and contributor and business adviser for Black Sports Online.



Former member and husband of former League President **Betty Seizinger, Reinhold K. Seizinger**, died Dec. 15 at age 89. He retained his membership for several years after Betty died.

League Action



SILENCED VOICES, SILENCED JUSTICE

With temperatures below freezing, seven League members joined dozens of others at the Jan. 4 Silent March in downtown Charlotte protesting judiciary gerrymandering, etc. The group listened to speakers and marched for nearly two hours. Shown at left, **Mary Klenz, Ann Wood, Peg Chapin, Debbie Snowdon, Delores Hurt, Judge Nancy Norelli, Tom Bowers** and **Judge Jane Harper**. Also attending was **Vashti Hurt**.

Pres. Hurt's Judicial Press Conference Remarks

Good Afternoon. I am **Delores Johnson Hurt**, President of the League Women Voters Charlotte Mecklenburg.

For those of you not familiar with our organization, we are a non-partisan, grassroots, political organization that encourages informed, active participation in our government.

The founders of the League of Women Voters and their predecessors led a 70-year fight for the right of women to vote in this country. They marched. They protested in front of the White House in blizzard conditions. They lobbied. They went on hunger strikes. They employed powers of persuasion.

Finally, in 1920, women were able to vote.

The League, therefore, is not new to the struggle of fighting for voting rights, equal rights, civil rights, women's rights and a representative government for all.

This newest battle - why we're here today - is the general assembly's attack on an independent judiciary. Its leaders want to gerrymander judges, name cronies to judgeships, limit judges to paltry two-year terms. The goal is not to improve the condition of the judiciary in the state, but in another greedy grab for power and control - destroy the pillar of the separation of powers we have long cherished in this country.

And all this is being done because recent judges - in the spirit of truth and fairness and democracy - have rebuked attempts to deny black Americans like me, other people of color, young people and the elderly - a say in our government.

What is being done is deplorable and we must fight every attempt to turn this country back.

So what do we do? We educate - as we are doing today. We lobby. We protest - and we vote out those who mean us no good! Thank you.

Also participating was "Democracy Bob" Harrison, who sang the "Gerrymandering Blues." to end the program.

LEADING ON OPPORTUNITY

James Ford told

League members that the way to get involved in the Leading on Opportunity effort to improve economic mobility in the city and county is to let the group know of your interest so that you can be connected to working groups as they are organized.

The contact is [here](#).



Your state and national League in action

LWVNC lwwnc.org

Call in to hear from @NCCConservation's Grady McCallie present about water issues in North Carolina during our Environment Action Team call, Tuesday, Jan 9 from 12-1pm. Dial-in Number: 515-604-9991 and Access Code: 303468. <http://ow.ly/GTwn30hCxca>

LWVUS lww.org

Urges support for Automatic Voter Registration Act

The League supports this legislation that enhances access for eligible voters in our elections and works to modernize our electoral system. This bill will improve the accuracy of voter records, cut down on costs, modernize outdated registration systems while supporting implementation in states across the country.

EVENTS

LWVCM holiday lunch drew a capacity crowd December 13



Holiday Celebration Honoring Women Elected to Office



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VETERANS
OF CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG**

1817 Central Ave., Rm. 210
Charlotte, NC 28205



Advocate—Educate—Empower

Visit LWVC-M's Website:
www.goleaguego.org

Dated Material

Forwarding Service Requested

All events are at the LWV-CM Center, 1817 Central Ave., Room 210, Charlotte 28205 unless otherwise noted. Click [here](#) for driving and parking directions.

Jan. 9 (Tues)	Board of Education meeting, 6 pm, 600 E. Fourth St., p. 1
Jan. 10 (Wed)	League Lunch, 11:30 am, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave., Room 210, p. 2
Jan. 13 (Sat)	Martin Luther King Parade, 10 am, Hal Marshall Center, 9th & Tryon Sts., p. 1
Jan. 20 (Sat)	Charlotte Women's March, 10 am, First Ward Park, Seventh & Brevard Sts., p. 1
Jan. 22 (Mon)	LWVCM Board Reflection/Look Forward meeting, 10 am, League Education Center
Jan. 24 (Wed)	Education Committees: Equity, 11:30 am; Innovations, 12:30 pm; Full committee 1:30 pm, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave. Room 210
Feb. 6 (Tues)	League Board of Directors, 6:15 pm, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave.
Feb. 20 (Tues)	League Talk, 6:30 pm, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave., page 2
Mar. 6 (Tues)	League Board of Directors, 6:15 pm, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave.

Check our [online calendar](#) for up-to-date LWVC-M events and meetings at goleaguego.org.