



VOTER

League of Women Voters of Charlotte-Mecklenburg

November-December 2017

REACHING LWV-CM

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Leading on Opportunity

James E. Ford, co-chair of the Leading on Opportunity Council, will bring his message to League members Wednesday, Nov. 8, 11:45 am at Lunch with the League.

Focusing on the education recommendations in the Opportunity Task Force's report which was unveiled in March, Mr. Ford will talk about next steps and ways in which individuals and groups, such as the League, can be involved.

Mr. Ford was a world history teacher at Garinger High School when he was chosen the NC Teacher of the Year in 2014. Currently, he is the Program Director at the Public School Forum of North Carolina, an education think-tank and advocacy organization in Raleigh.

(continued p. 2)



James E. Ford

Last Minute Election Information

Watch the League's Mayoral Debate on WTVI here:

<http://www.wtvi.org/charlotte-mayoral-debate-2017/15109>

Go to [VOTE 411.COM](http://VOTE411.COM) for candidate and election information

Pick up a paper VOTERS' GUIDE with candidate and election information, available at the League center, 1817 Central Ave., libraries and other sites

Go to <http://www.voteyesforbonds.com/> and <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsbondinfo/Pages/default.aspx> for school bond information.

Saturday, Nov. 4, until 1 pm: LAST DAY OF EARLY VOTING
Monday, Nov. 6, 5 pm: LAST DAY TO RETURN ABSENTEE BALLOT
Tuesday, Nov 7, 6:30 am-7:30 pm ELECTION DAY (Same day registration at the poll available)

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Find updates for League action and activities at goleaguego.org

Vote Tuesday, Nov. 7; Yes for School Bonds

Don't let someone else decide your representatives

Coming Events

James E. Ford Speaks to Lunch with the League (continued from p. 1)

He earned a bachelor of science in mass communication from Illinois State University in 2003 and a master's degree in teaching from Rockford University in 2009.

Ford was recognized as Charlotte Magazine's 2014 Charlottean of the Year, the 2014 National Alliance of Black School Educators' Teacher of the Year and is a Carnegie Fellow. He is a self-professed "equity warrior" who believes education is a human right, and he writes and speaks extensively on the topics of race, class, and education equity and advocates for the most disadvantaged student populations.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force was convened to study the issues of economic mobility in Charlotte. Among its recommendations was formation of the 19-member Council chaired by Ford and Andrea Smith, which brings together a representative group of Charlotte-Mecklenburg leaders.

The mission of Leading on Opportunity is to convene and connect sectors across the community to implement the recommendations of the Task Force to improve economic mobility in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. As charged in the report, the organization will take a systemic approach to addressing the key determinants of early childhood education, college and career readiness, and family stability, while simultaneously focusing on the cross-cutting factors of segregation and social capital.

The Task Force had "focused on the inheritance of intergenerational poverty and its negative impact on the life trajectory of far too many of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's children and youth." Spurred on by the 2013 Harvard/UC Berkeley study ranking Charlotte 50th out of 50 in economic mobility, community leaders decided it was time "to take bold action to bridge this opportunity gap."

The Task Force determined that early care and education was an urgent, important strategy to deal with the impact of poverty. The report recommended:

- ▶ Make the necessary investments to ensure all children in Mecklenburg County from birth to age five have access to quality early childhood care and education.
- ▶ Strengthen the early care and education workforce to improve the quality and experiences of early care and education available to children ages birth to five.
- ▶ Support parents and other caregivers as a child's first teacher in promoting positive early brain development, social and emotional health and early literacy beginning at birth.

You can read these and other recommendations reported in the Executive Summary [here](#).

Below, James Ford speaking at a Race and Justice Forum attended by Debbie Snowdon, Barbara Bleiweis and Delores Hurt.



DECEMBER HOLIDAY LUNCH

Wed., December 13

A book for children ages 0-8 gets you in

Watch your email for the e-vite and check goleaguego.org for more information.

COMING IN JANUARY

Robert Dawkins, state coordinator SAFE Coalition, NC, will be featured at Lunch with the League Wed., Jan. 10, 2018, 11:45 am. SAFE Coalition NC began in 2013 as a grassroots effort to promote police accountability. SAFE stands for Safety, Accountability, Fairness and Equity.

In League

Pres. Hurt featured in *Charlotte Magazine*

The profile of LWVCM was raised significantly with the publication of an interview with League President **Delores Johnson Hurt** in *Charlotte Magazine* Oct. 19.

In the interview by Greg Lacour, Delores highlighted League plans and voting issues as our group nears its 100th anniversary in 2020.

Lacour wrote, "Delores Johnson Hurt, 71, is the second African American president of the League of Women Voters Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the local chapter of the venerable nonpartisan civic and voter advocacy organization. She's a pioneer in other ways, as well, having enrolled at Winthrop University in 1964 as one of its first black students. Since her election as LWV president in May 2016, she's tried to raise the group's public profile and counter the increasing barriers to voting, such as North Carolina's voter ID law, gerrymandered districts, and the old nemesis of voter apathy. We asked her about the League's plans and challenges this election season."

You can read the full interview [here](#).



Photo by Logan Cyrus

Welcome New Members

Shannon Jefferson
William Jefferson
William Porter
Jeanne Smith

League Members in the Community

Sarah Belk Gambrell, 69-year member, has, through her Gambrell Foundation, given Queens University \$10 million for renovation of an arts building on campus. It will be named the Sarah Belk Gambrell Center for the Arts & Civic Engagement in her honor, according to university officials.

Cricket Weston was featured in the spring Charlotte Symphony program as a long-time member of the Charlotte Symphony Chorus. An alto, she has been singing Handel's *Messiah* for 50 years.

Rita Bowers' art has been shown frequently in Charlotte exhibits. You can see some of her pieces [here](#).

Word has been received of the death of a former member of the League, **Hazel Teague Crothers** (1919-2017).

Below: League members surround 50-year member **Thereasea Elder** at her 90th "Hats on for Thereasea" birthday party recently. Shown are l-r: Mary Klenz, Thereasea Elder, Ann Wood, Peg Chapin and Lucille Howard.



[League of Women
Voters of North
Carolina](#)

Check out the newly-designed LWVNC website at lwnvnc.org.

See the latest tweets, alerts, events and more. Keep up with activities of the state League's action teams [here](#).



Fair Elections Action Team

“Problems Remain”

A federal court has found it to be likely that lawmakers did not remedy unconstitutional racial gerrymanders in nine state House and Senate districts and has appointed a special master to help it make a final determination.

A Stanford Law School professor will “assist the Court . . . by developing an appropriate plan remedying the constitutional violations,” according to an order filed in *Covington v. Rucho*.

Redistricting legislative and congressional districts continues to dominate the news in North Carolina and provides plenty of fodder for the LWVCM Fair Election Action Team to deal with.

Fair Elections Action Team leader **Barbara Bleiweis and Trisha Garcia** (shown at right) gave League members an update on the issue in September.



The committee has organized a Get Out the Vote effort as a way to get non-voters interested in the issue of gerrymandered voting districts.

Members wearing VOTE shirts will be on Charlotte street corners during the noon hour every weekday through Election Day, Nov. 7, handing out Vote411.org information.

Mary Kaczmarek is leading the effort and seeking volunteers. Call her at 704-618-1537.



Committee members Mary Kaczmarek, Mary Cox, Debbie Snowdon & Allison Binder



Members Margaret Howe-Soper, Ashleigh Morgan & Cate Stadelman



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Civics 101

When the 48 graduates of the LWVCM first fall Civics 101 class received their certificates, they became part of the 20-year tradition of classes finishing a “Venture into Local Politics.” Four classes learning the nuts and bolts of city and county government, school board and the judicial system culminated with a dinner at the Charlotte Observer for a commencement and “Meet the Press.”



Taylor Batten

It was also a first for Civics 101 to have its final session at the new Observer office on the 13th floor of the NASCAR Museum.

Editorial page editor of the Observer, **Taylor Batten**, showed the students the article written by reporter **Jim Morrill** about the first Civics 101 class and talked about League leaders, President **Betty Seizinger** and **Mary Klenz**, who started the annual event in 1997. He noted that, since then, Charlotte has had 6 mayors and the population has doubled.



Jim Morrill

Batten and Morrill talked about the separation of news and opinion at the paper and reviewed the significant changes that have occurred at the paper as the staff and pages have shrunk even though readership is up.

Caroline Portillo, interim editor of the Content Studio, de-

scribed the relatively new division of the paper that encompasses additional publications, podcast Charlotte Five and other enterprises designed to focus on bringing more revenue to the paper.

Reflecting on the classes, Civics 101 director **Tom Murdock** said attendees were surprised by the amount of dissension they heard between county commissioners during a discussion about giving the city of Charlotte Memorial Stadium for soccer. Further, he noted, that the County Government session had heated discussion among the students

about the way voters learn about elections. Some felt that this is the committed voter’s responsibility. Others felt that primary runoffs, for example, are not publicized and result in turnouts as low as 3% in the recent District Five primary runoff.

“If one goal of Civics 101 is to get citizen engagement, this Civics 101 Fall session appears to meet that objective,” he noted.

League members **Leta Bosc**, **Trisha Garcia**, **Pam Liebman** and **June White** were praised for helping to put on the extra Civics 101 program. Leta and Tricia had been class members before joining the League.



Caroline Portillo



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Education Action

Funding CMS Schools

Audiences at the League’s two forums on Funding CMS Schools heard some eye-opening comments from presenters **Charles Jeter, Elyse Dashew and Brandon Neal** about state formulas for funding schools and capital needs in the county.

Mr. Jeter, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Government Relations Coordinator, told the groups “it is critical to pay attention to [the candidates] you elect to make funding decisions.” He noted that 60-90% of what CMS has to provide to students is determined by the state, and that “Charlotte has a PR problem with the Legislature.” A legislative committee is studying changes to current school funding formulas and should be closely tracked and its proposals examined.

He explained that CMS is funded 60% by the state, 30% by county commissioners and 10% with federal “encumbered” funds for which CMS has no flexibility. **The school board has no taxing authority.**



Charles Jeter

The two forums, one in east Charlotte and another in west Charlotte, were funded with a GOTV grant from the Blueprint organization. The co-sponsors for the events were E.A.S.T., the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.; Queen City Chapter and MomsRising.

Elyse Dashew, vice chair of the Mecklenburg County Board of Education, and Brandon Neal, a CMS graduate and supporter, made the case for approving the \$922 million bond issue for schools. The district has 78 schools over 50 years old. Ms. Dashew cited the overcrowding at many schools, noting that lunch is at 10 am for some South Meck students and not until 1:30 pm for others whose school day begins at 7:10 am and ends at 2:15.



Elyse Dashew



Brandon Neal

President Delores Hurt’s Opening Statement

“From the very beginning of our Republic, well-educated citizens were thought to be essential to protecting liberty and the general welfare of the people. Even before the US Constitution was established, the 1785 Land Ordinance and 1787 Northwest Ordinance acknowledged the nation’s responsibility to provide land for education.

But today, public education is under attack. It has ceded to calls for more charter schools and the unsupported belief that privatization is the answer to the problem of “poor schools.”

The LWV has a long history of supporting public education. We believe this year’s school bond referendum moves us toward the goal of achieving equal access to quality schools for all students. We also believe that socio-economic and cultural/racial integration of schools, along with early childhood education, parental engagement, teacher development and inviting learning environments are all vital components of a good education.”

LWVCM Education Committee

Our Focus Teams on Education Funding, Equity, and Innovations continue their work.

The Equity team is studying CMS school data to assess factors such as school and staff stability, resources and course offerings in schools with varying socioeconomic demographics. They are evaluating the notion of advocating for the return of a CMS School Board Equity Committee.

The Innovations Team is studying the state school grading scheme, and they will continue their efforts to engender more cooperation among the various entities that make decisions about our schools (e.g. School Board, County Commission, City Council.) Many members of the committee continue to study and advocate for Early Childhood Education initiatives.

The next Education Committee meeting will be Wed., Nov. 1, 1:30 pm at the League Center, 1817 Central Ave. That morning, the Equity Team will meet at 10:30 am, and the Innovations Team will meet at 12 noon.

All are invited to attend any of these meetings.

—Helene Hilger, co-chair

GOTV=Get Out the Vote

VOTER REGISTRATION

By the voter registration deadline for the Nov. 7 election, volunteers for LWVCM had registered some 2,500 new voters, including 1,600 at Naturalization Ceremonies, according to Voter Service director **Marian Silverman**.

“Reminder to Vote” postcards will have been sent to all new citizens prior to the election with a \$4,000 grant from LWVUS.

The Voter Service committee also has a \$1,000 grant for its Youth Voter Initiative.

Volunteers worked at three venues for National Voter Registration Day Sept. 26.

Reita Pendry is coordinating a new voter registration initiative at the new Goodwill Campus on Wilkinson Blvd.



Naturalization Ceremony at the Levine Museum of the New South.



Marian Silverman at Rockwell Community Fair.

There's still time to help Get Out the Vote

Support the school bond referendum:

- *Go to <http://www.voteyesforbonds.com/> to volunteer
- **Put a 'Vote Yes for Bonds' sign in your yard
- ***Hand out cards at the polls
- ****Help with the texting program sending promotions and reminders to those who have agreed to receive them.

Volunteer to hand out Vote411.com information on city streets with the Fair Elections Action Team (see p. 4).



League members and friends walked in the Charlotte Labor Day Parade handing out hundreds of Vote 411.org bookmarks as Beth Springer drove her decorated car.

LWVCM Board of Directors meets on Nov. 6.
Members are always welcome to attend.



Advocate—Educate—Empower

Visit LWV-CM's Website:
www.goleaguego.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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.

- Nov. 1 (Wed) Education Committee, 1:30 pm, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave.
- Nov. 4 (Sat) Last day of early voting, 1:00 pm
- Nov. 6 (Mon) League Board of Directors, 6:15 pm, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave.
- Nov. 7 (Tues) ELECTION DAY 6:30 am-7:30 pm
- Nov. 8 (Wed) Lunch with the League, 11:30 am, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave., page 1
- Dec. 5 (Tues) League Board of Directors, 6:15 pm, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave.
- Dec. 13 (Wed) Holiday Lunch, 11:30 am, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave., page 2
- Jan. 2 (Tues) League Board of Directors, 6:15 pm, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave.
- Jan. 10 (Wed) Lunch with the League, 11:30 am, League Education Center, 1817 Central Ave., page 2.

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