



## April 2025 League Lines

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## **1. CALENDAR**

**Thursday, April 3** (6:00 – 8:00 pm) – **Consensus Meeting #4, Federal Judiciary Study** (at home of Laurel Suggs). Click **HERE** to email *Laurel Suggs* or **HERE** to email *Pat Forbis*.

**Friday, April 4** (4:00 – 5:00 pm) – **Environment Committee meeting** (Zoom). Contact *Franni Eargle* (click **HERE**) or *Elaine Cooper* (click **HERE**).

**Saturday, April 5** (2:00 – 5:00 pm) – **Hands Off! National Day of Action** (SC Statehouse). Contact *Christine Hait* or *David Smith*. See [#5](#).

**Monday, April 7** (5:00 – 6:00 pm) – **LWVSC Legislative Update** (Zoom). Click **HERE** to register. Presented by LWVSC lobbyists (and LWVCA members) *Lynn Teague*, *Dr. Janelle Rivers*, *Teresa Arnold*.

**Tuesday, April 8** (1:00 – 2:30 pm) – **VOTE411 Committee meeting** (Zoom and Still-Hopes Retirement Community). Contact *Gloria Prevost* by clicking **HERE**.

**Wednesday, April 9** (10:00 – 11:00 am) – **Education K-12 / Observer Corps meeting** (Richland Main Library). Contact *Kathryn Brookins* (click **HERE**) or *Amy Mikell* (click **HERE**).

**Thursday, April 10** (6:30 – 7:30 pm) – **Membership Committee meeting** (Zoom). Contact *Nicole Sanchez* by clicking **HERE**.

**Monday, April 14** (6:00 – 7:15 pm) – **Board meeting** (Zoom). *Contact Christine Hait by clicking [HERE](#).*

**Tuesday, April 15** (6:30 – 7:30 pm) – **Voter Participation Committee meeting** (Zoom). *Contact Aisha Jones by clicking [HERE](#).*

**Wednesday, April 16** – Last day to register for the **LWVSC Biennial Convention** (Greenville, May 16-17). Click **HERE** for more info and to register. *Contact Christine Hait. See [#8](#).*

**Thursday, April 17** (11:30 am – 1:00 pm) – **Public Policy Luncheon** (Lourie Center). Topic: “*The Importance of Local Government: Growth and Civility.*” Speaker: Todd Glover (Executive Director, The Municipal Association of SC). See [#3](#).

**Tuesday, April 22** – deadline for members to send the Board (Mary Edmonds) any comments about the draft “Local Program” for fiscal year 25-26. (Check your March 17 email). *Contact Mary Edmonds by clicking [HERE](#).*

**Thursday, May 22** (5:00 – 7:00 pm) – **LWVCA Annual Meeting** (at the home of Laurel Suggs). See [#9](#).

**Tuesday, June 3** - Irmo Special Election to fill the unexpired term of Council Member Erik Sickinger, who resigned.

## **2. PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**



Empowering voters and defending democracy: that's the work of the League, work that we all want to contribute to in this critical moment when efforts to disempower voters and undermine democracy are real and concerning.

The good news is that the League has focused its efforts on meeting these challenges.

As you probably know from recent emails that you have received, LWVUS is preparing to sue the federal government to stop the SAVE Act (H.22), which would require all Americans who want to register to vote in a federal election (or update their voter registration) to present documentary proof of citizenship in person. For the vast majority of Americans, this would require a passport or birth certificate, and this **documentation must match a person's current legal name**.

LWVUS has also spoken out against the more recent executive order on voting from President Trump, an order that also requires proof of U.S. citizenship on election forms. In a press release published on the LWVUS website, Celina Stewart, the CEO of the LWVUS, wrote the following: "Let's keep it real: this order is not about protecting elections; it is about making it harder for voters — particularly *women voters* — to participate in them." Stewart notes, "**Nearly 80% of married women — more than 69 million American women — adopt their partner's surname, and they would be unable to register to vote if the name on their ID does not directly match their proof of citizenship.**"

Here in South Carolina, Cherie Walker, LWV of Oconee and Pickens County member and LWVSC Director of Electronic Communications, has begun the Women Defend Democracy in South Carolina initiative. Walker is sending out weekly lists of national, state, and local actions that league members can take to defend democracy. These action lists answer the question many of us are asking as we read about threats to our democracy, "What can we do?"

Actions for the week of March 24, 2025, include ACTION5: Save the Date April 5 for Hands Off! National Day of Action. Hands Off! events are being held across the country that Saturday, including here in the Columbia area at the State House. The rally at the State House, from 2- 5 pm, is an opportunity for all LWVCA members to show up and support the LWVUS, one of the mobilization efforts many sponsors, and to join people across the country who are fighting back against attacks on our democracy.

See you at the State House and thank you for supporting the League as we continue to empower voters and defend democracy.

In League,  
Christine Hait

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### 3. APRIL PUBLIC POLICY LUNCHEON



APRIL 2025  
**PUBLIC POLICY LUNCHEON**  
THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2025  
11:30 AM - 1 PM, THE LOURIE CENTER

*This Month's Topic:*

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT



At a time when the federal government is not responsive to the concerns of local citizens, Mr. Todd Glover will provide a look at the many services the association provides to towns and cities in our state.

He will also reinforce the importance of civic participation in local government. After meeting Todd, you will be more determined than ever to participate in local elections and monitor local city council meetings.



**PRESENTER:** TODD GLOVER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, S.C. MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

**COST:** FREE (BRING YOUR OWN LUNCH) OR \$12 FOR A CATERED LUNCH

REGISTER ON EVENTBRITE

[Click Here to Register](#)

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#### **4. SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO HELP DEFEND DEMOCRACY?**



Even taking one small action can help us fight the negative emotions we are feeling and leave us feeling empowered to do more.

1. **Each Monday**, look for an email with a just FEW specific actions you can take that week to help defend our democracy at the national, state, and local level.
2. Then use the *LWVSC Effective Advocacy Toolkit* to help make your voice heard!

Click [HERE](#)

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#### **5. JOIN THE 'HANDS OFF!' DAY OF ACTION**

**Saturday, April 5, 2:00 – 5:00 PM**

**SC Statehouse**



On April 5, LWV is joining national partners for [Hands Off!](#), a mobilization in response to the current administration's attacks on our democracy, basic rights, and overreach of power. Events are being held all across the country! **All League members are invited join this event at the SC Statehouse!**

So as to maintain our nonpartisanship it is important that any placards associated with LWV members use the suggested language of the **Hands Off** event. It is okay to wear LWV clothing and/or badges.

Suggestions for placards:

- Hands Off Our Democracy!
- Hands Off Our Health Care!
- Hands Off Social Security!
- Hands Off Our Data!
- Hands Off Public Schools!
- Hands Off Our Bodies!
- Hands Off Our Wallets!
- Hands Off Public Lands

Participating members should refer to our protest safety guidance available [on the League Management Site.](#)

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## **6. MIDLANDS GIVES**



CENTRAL CAROLINA  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

May 6, 2025, is Midlands Gives Day! Midlands Gives is an 18-hour online fundraiser for nonprofits sponsored by the Central Carolina Community Foundation. Look for social media posts from the League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area and share them with your friends, family and coworkers on social media, by email or giving them a call to encourage them to give.

Donation to the League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area can be made on the site [www.midlandsgives.org/LWVColumbiaArea](http://www.midlandsgives.org/LWVColumbiaArea).

You can give online any time before or after May 6, 2025. However, please do help us encourage those in the Midlands to include LWVCA on their giving list for this annual Midlands Gives fundraiser on May 6.

Our fundraising goal is \$2000. Contact Anita T. Baker by clicking **HERE** for more information.

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## **7. MARCH PUBLIC POLICY LUNCHEON RECAP**

*(thanks to Pamela Craig)*

Jimmy Nesbitt, Columbia Editor for The Post and Courier, was our guest speaker on the topic of The Importance of Local Journalism. The League has a position statement on



how they view the role of newspapers and their impact on democracy. To view that position you might want to get a copy of the League's Impact on Issues 2024-2026, available through Amazon for \$6.99 (click [HERE](#)).

The Post and Courier was started in 1803 and is one of a few family newspapers left in the United States. It has been run by the Manigault Family of Charleston for four generations and has won several prestigious awards including a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of domestic violence. There was even a story about the paper that was on the CBS Sunday Morning Show. It is probably available on YouTube, if you know how to look for it. However, because Google, Facebook and other internet services have taken about \$.70 of every advertising dollar, the Courier as well as other papers struggle to stay afloat.

To go back to the League's Impact Statement, it sees local journalism as essential to our democracy to provide citizens with the necessary information, so they are able to cast an informed ballot. Because of the decline in revenue, it has become necessary for newspapers to consider other means of collecting information and communicating with the public, i.e. internet particularly for those areas of the State identified as "news deserts" (a place with no local news outlets). A loss in local news usually leads to a drop in voter turnout, and possibly various levels and types of corruption because there is no "watch dog". This would be a good time to mention our own Observer Corp. We serve as watch dogs and fill a void in those areas with limited newspaper outlets and coverage.

In Columbia, the Courier took over the Free Times and has a small staff of local reporters. It is also offered in various areas within the State, North Augusta, PeeDee, Myrtle Beach, Columbia, Charleston, Greenville, York and Spartanburg.

The Post and Courier has a foundation called the Public Service and Investigative Fund. The purpose of the fund is to encourage public service and support journalism particularly in the areas of education, climate and investigative journalism. Please visit the Courier's website if you are interested in donating.

Also, pick up an issue and read it. You might find it more interesting and informative and consider signing up for delivery.

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## **8. LWVSC Biennial Convention 2025**

**Deadline to Register: April 16**



**Friday, May 16, 2025 - 4:00pm to Saturday, May 17, 2025 - 4:00pm**

Greenville Technical College Center for Manufacturing Innovation

575 Millenium Blvd., Greenville, SC 29607

### **What's it about?**

Every two years delegates from South Carolina Leagues gather to adopt a state Program and Action Agenda and a budget, elect a slate of officers/directors, and act on any governance proposals like bylaws changes. LWVSC Convention always includes great speakers and break-out sessions. Once again, this year's program will be stellar!

### **Who can go?**

- Any active LWVCA League member can attend as an "Observer" (cannot vote).
- *There are a few "Delegate" positions still available; please contact Christine Hait (click **HERE**) if you are interested.*

### **Registration options:**

- **Two-day** registration: **\$170**
- **Friday-only** registration: **\$60** (4 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.)

- **Saturday-only** registration: **\$120** (8 a.m. - 4 p.m.)

**Click [HERE](#) for details on:**

- Registration, overnight lodging, agenda, speakers, etc.
  - Delegates will be reimbursed for the cost of registration. Some scholarships may be available for lodging (see Christine Hait)
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## **9. ANNUAL MEETING – MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

Our Annual Meeting will be held May 22, 5:00 p.m., at the home of Laurel Suggs. We'll be both concluding business of the past year and looking ahead to next year. Officers will be elected.

Once the meeting is adjourned, our social will begin. Each attendee is invited to contribute an appetizer (table-ready including serving utensils) or a bottle of wine or your favorite nonalcoholic beverage. Laurel will have soft drinks and water. They have a covered porch and patio, so let's keep our fingers crossed for nice weather.

Laurel says we can park in their parking pad or driveway, or anywhere along Blythe Glenn Rd. We're asked to come through the garage to their back door.

This is a good time to both feel a part of the League's work and enjoy socializing with those whose commitment to democracy matches yours.

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## **10. VOTE411 UPDATE**

*The next Vote411 Committee Meeting is 1 p.m. on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at Still Hopes Guignard Mansion Dining Room (in person) or via Zoom*

### **VOTE411 is READY! Are You?**

Do you know if you live in one of the 6 municipalities in Richland County, 13 in Lexington County or an unincorporated "doughnut hole?"

Forest Acres, Richland County, will hold their municipal election in the “off-year,” May 13.

*Invitations to Participate in VOTE411* were sent March 28th to the 5 candidates, including the 2 incumbents, for 2 at-large seats on the Forest Acres City Council election May 13. Candidates were invited to respond to the following questions:

1. What prompted you to run for Forest Acres City Council?
2. What opportunities do you see for the City in the redevelopment of the Richland Mall site?
3. What are your top priorities for action by City Council?

The VOTE411 Voter Guide will go LIVE April 8 with details of the race and candidate responses, in their own words, to help voters make informed choices.

We look forward to understanding “The Importance of Local Government: Growth and Civility” when Todd Glover, Exec. Dir., of the Municipal Association of SC addresses the Public Policy Luncheon, Thursday, April 17, 11:30AM, Lourie Center. (See [#3](#) above).

Would you like to “make a difference?” Attend the VOTE411 Committee meeting April 8th at 1 p.m. at Still Hopes or by Zoom. New members and” visitors” are welcome. Please text Gloria Prevost (click **HERE**) for more information.

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## **11. BOOK CLUB SCHEDULE FOR 2025**

**July 16:** Policing White Supremacy: The Enemy Within by Mike German and Beth Zasloff  
Leader: Anne Mellen

**September 17:** Humankind: a Hopeful History. Leader: Marianne McGrath

**November 19:** Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond  
Leader: Laura Woliver

We still need a book leader for May 21<sup>st</sup>. Anne Mellen will coordinate the book club for 2025. Contact Anne for additional details by clicking [HERE](#).

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## **12. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

### **Buddy System**

Joining a new group can be daunting, if not overwhelming, but buddies make it easier. For that reason, LWV Columbia has begun offering a new service to its new members – a buddy to show them the ropes and help them get acclimated to all the League has to offer. Interested newcomers to our chapter will be paired with a veteran member who will act as their guide and a recognizable face.

If you'd like to be a buddy to a new member or are a new member wanting to be paired, please email Nicole Sanchez, chair of our Membership Committee, by clicking **HERE**. We are actively looking for veteran members who we can call in for the right newbie.

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## **13. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

The Environment Committee will meet on **Friday, April 3<sup>th</sup> via zoom at 4:00-5:00pm.**

The agenda features a discussion of upcoming Committee events. The Committee will host a workshop entitled: ***Climate Change & Resiliency: Is SC Ready?*** at the LWV State Convention on May 17<sup>th</sup> in Greenville, SC. The workshop will feature a panel of speakers on climate change as well as an interactive discussion. The agenda will also feature next steps in working on environmental justice work with the Lower Richland community. For more information, contact Franni Eargle by clicking **HERE**.

***Take Action for Environmental Justice:*** On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the New Alpha Community Development Corporation and Partners will host a Legislative Day on environmental justice, titled ***Voices United, Communities Strong***, from 8:00 am - 10 am at Mount Zion Baptist Church, located at 801 Washington Street, Columbia, SC. The event will move next to the State House from 10:00 am - 2 pm. Contact Elaine Cooper for more information by clicking **HERE**.

**In the News:** On March 20th, U.S. Environmental Protection staff and former staff members authored an op-ed for the American public regarding their mission to uphold the oath to protect and invest in a clean environment. (To read this op-ed in its entirety, click **HERE**).

They go on to say that they are committed to providing effective programs and being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. There are many policies in place to ensure accountability. Despite careful planning and oversight, the new administration is halting programs that Americans depend on for their health and well-being. The op-ed piece concluded by sharing effective ways Americans can get involved to raise awareness of the importance of working together. The Trump administration may take note of the need to restore critical funding to the people.

**Last week**, the EPA released a list of 31 regulations it intends to scale back or eliminate, including rules further limiting air pollution from cars and power plants, restrictions on mercury emissions, and clean water protections for rivers and streams. EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin called the extraordinary series of rollbacks the “greatest day of deregulation our nation has seen” and claimed it as a “dagger straight into the heart of the climate change religion.” The most consequential planned actions are to reconsider a landmark 2009 finding that greenhouse gases harm human health, which legally underpins rules addressing global warming. This action will stop regulations that prevent nearly 200,000 premature deaths over the next 25 years and escalate the impacts on global warming.

**In the Courts:** On Tuesday, March 20, US District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan temporarily blocked EPA Administrator Zeldin’s efforts to stop climate grants made by the Biden administration that totaled \$20 billion. Judge Chutkan wrote that EPA “provided no legal justification for the termination” of the contracts. Furthermore, it appears that EPA’s decision to revoke the grants was arbitrary and capricious actions.

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#### **14. EDUCATION/OBSERVER CORPS JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING**

The K-12 Education Committee and the Observer Corps met for our joint meeting on March 12. We discussed the recent book challenge of The Hunger Games in Lexington 1. Thankfully, the Lex1 school board voted to retain the book series. Thanks to Tricia

Pruitt for reaching out, we have a lead in LexRich5 for voter registration for their faculty and staff beginning-of-the year kickoff.

We're excited to work with the Voter Participation Committee to register teachers and staff to vote! LWVCA member and library sciences doctoral candidate, Katie Klein, shared with the committee the basics of how books are chosen for school libraries, how the recent book regulation has changed the process of book challenges, and she shared information about a recently filed bill, H.4059, which provides protections for librarians.

Our next meeting will be **April 9 at 10 am** at the Richland Main Library in Meeting Room N.

We will have a faculty member from a local institution of higher education to speak with us about how recent attacks on DEI have affected higher ed. We hope to see you there!

Please contact Kathryn Brookins (click **HERE**) if you'd like to attend for the first time.

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## **15. OBSERVER CORPS REPORTS**

### **March 2025**

#### **Regular Meeting Forest Acres City Council, 2/11/25 (Melanie Trimble)**

To begin, there were several new employees and promotions recognized. In addition, Jeremy Burroughs was introduced as a new fully credentialed commercial inspector for the city. The city accountant of 11 years is leaving, and the city will be looking to fill the position.

Jessica Berry presented findings of the city audit for the year ending June 30, 2024. In their opinion, all financial statements seem accurate (unmodified opinion). No issues were found in internal controls or compliance with federal grants. The whole city total assets for 2024 were \$27 million, over last year of \$25 million. Total liabilities went from \$15 million in prior year to \$14 million. Much of that is due to the ARPA (Covid) money. Generally, more was earned than expected, and less was spent than expected. Overall, it was a very good audit with no issues.

Hospitality Tax money of \$15,900 was approved for the following community events: Flora Booster Super Saturday April 5th (\$2250), Midlands Light Opera (first grant ask)

\$2450, The Bankhead Memorial Smash Tennis Tournament at Rockbridge for the SCOA Cancer Foundation (\$10,000) and \$1200 to Sweep the Acres event to pick up trash in the spring.

Andrew Epting was appointed to the Beautification Committee. The mayor was voted to be the city representative to the Columbia City Comet Board. The city manager reported that in the former Richland Mall site, the park area is cleared, and the plan is to finish demolition in late March/early April. Currently the city is planning next year's budget with various city departments. The tree removal at the parks (post hurricane) has created a need for some shade structures, especially at Citadel Park, the bench swings throughout the acres, and the walking surface at Quinine Hill Park. Business license renewal time is now and can be renewed in person or online, many zoning ordinance updates will be presented to the planning commission next week, some on zoom. The city accountant reported the city is currently ahead on revenue from property taxes, businesses licenses, and franchise fees. The expenditures are slightly lower than normal this year. The grant revenue for the Mall Park has come in and will be kept in a separate account.

The police chief reported escalated traffic stops on Forest Drive and Bethel Church to deter speeding. There have been some violent crimes recently, and they have all been successfully resolved (arson, vehicular assault, a shooting). The chief anticipates being fully staffed by the end of March. Any residents willing to have officers visit in their yard or porch to answer any questions by neighbors during the "Front Porch Roll Call" should contact the city.

During the citizens forum, Mr. Austin Coleman raised the issue of speeding on Clemson Road. He noted that the patrol cars help slow it down, even when there aren't tickets being issued. The city manager is speaking with the DOT to consider additional speed control measures when they repave soon. He noted that all options are not allowable by federal statute. Ms. Davis asked about new buildings on Satchelford Road where the water is running off into their yards on Brenthaven Road.

#### **Regular Meeting, Irmo Town Council, 2/25/25(Nicole Sanchez)**

After some quick business and the announcement of new businesses, the Council honored Elizabeth Ashley in her 100th Birthday. Ms. Ashley has dedicated her life to service by fostering 66 children and donating her time to the March of Dimes, ASPCA, St. Jude's, and more.

Later, two very polished young men presented for Young Men United. The program features mentorships and internships. Then in the resident communications portion,



Council addressed some concerns that the residents had. These included Lumos' install of fiber, but no issues have been reported yet. Citizens were also encouraged to participate in the [Links to Lake Murray](#) survey.

The council also approved a variety of measures. They annexed a half an acre lot from Lexington County, approved contract with architects to complete the new Town Hall, and lined themselves up to be able to take out a bond for the City Hall if it becomes necessary. Though the Town does not think this will be necessary, this allows them to still construct the Town Hall if some of the money they have lined up (including some federal dollars) falls through. They also approved the closing of streets for the Cherry Blossom Festival and the beginning of a Christmas Parade.

Lastly, in a first for the state of South Carolina, the Town Council of Irmo approved a resolution in support of instant runoff voting. The National League of Women Voters has a position that supports instant runoff voting, also known as ranked choice voting. There is a bill currently in the Statehouse that would give municipalities the option of using instant runoff voting. This resolution is a loud voice that tells the legislature that this bill is something that municipalities want.

#### **Regular Meeting, Lexington Two Schools, 2/27/25 (Amy Mikell)**

The meeting was upbeat and efficient, with a lot of business covered in one hour instead of the usual two or more. CATE (Career and Technical Education) Month was observed by spotlighting the large number of “completers” (students finishing coursework to become certified in their chosen areas) at the Lexington Two Innovation Center. Matt Schilit, principal of Airport High School, has been named the state Principal of the Year for Exceptional Children in recognition of his dedication to inclusion and to fostering a positive environment for all students at his school. Brooke Hyatt, a first-year fourth-grade teacher at Cayce Elementary School is a finalist for the Induction Teacher of the Year award. Finally, Dr. Angela Cooper, head of human resources, has been named S.C.'s Education Personnel Administrator of the Year due to her innovative approaches to teacher recruitment and retention.

Superintendent Dr. Brenda Hafner described her presentation to the Chamber of Commerce, which was intended to encourage business partners to boost the district. She also spoke of the “Lexington Two Grows” professional development program to teach leadership skills to staff who want to grow in their careers. After final revisions and approvals, one of which is approving a trip for culinary arts students to the “Taste of Italy”

event in various cities in Italy March 26-April 4, 2027, the meeting was adjourned to executive session.

**Regular Meeting, Lexington County Registration and Elections Board, 3/3/25 (David Smith)**

I was the only member of the general public in attendance. The Board and staff were very welcoming.

The first item of business was community voting centers. Presently, because a number of precinct locations are not handicap accessible, the Board plans to use several high schools in the county. The plan will need approval from the Lexington County delegation and from County Council, which would fund the project. The high schools used for voting centers would need to close at noon the day before the election to set up equipment. The LWVCA will need to learn the timeline and whether the CVCs would replace or supplement the deficient precinct sites.

In preparation for the 2025 general election, the Board plans to have 45-50 precinct sites for 96 precincts; there will be only one early voting site at the Main Street office. Note: increasing the number of early voting sites is a possible advocacy opportunity for LWVAC.

Finally, the Board plans to visit all 18 high schools in Lexington County before April 30 to distribute information on voting and to register eligible seniors. They will also go to senior citizen centers. Christine Hait, Sharon Ayling, Janet Wedlock and I will meet with the Board on March 13 to explore opportunities to collaborate.

**Regular Meeting, West Columbia City Council, 3/4/25 (Amy Mikell)**

Mayor Tem Miles announced three upcoming events. The Kinetic Derby Day (4/26/25 11:00-3:30) is a hugely popular one. On April 3-6 the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Tartan Day South will draw participants (and business) from a broad area. Finally, on May 9 from 5:30-9:30 P.M. the Art on State will be held on the 100 block of State Street; live bands and muralists will be featured.

Various proclamations and recognitions followed. Among them were naming March 8 as Women Leaders in Business Day in West Columbia; honors for Vanessa Mota, whose Cross-Linking Business Academy encourages entrepreneurs from diverse cultures; and capital needs requests over the next five years for various departments: water treatment, streets, sanitation, and parks. Marquis Solomon, Fire Chief, spoke of equipment needs that remind us of how much they do to protect citizens. He listed “drysuits” that protect

divers during water rescues in the 56 degrees waters of the Saluda River. Also was a device that applies CPR mechanically so that the firemen can provide drugs, bandages, etc.

Later in the meeting, Council approved Spartan Fire and Emergency Apparatus, Inc. to provide a ladder truck for the fire department. Such trucks cost over \$2,000,000 and can take more than a year to build. The meeting was then adjourned.

**Regular Meeting, Gaston Town Hall Meeting, 3/4/25 (Susan and Stephanie Phillips)**

There were no speakers for Public Forum. There was no financial update. Several applicants have volunteered for the Planning and Zoning committee- all were accepted to serve. There were several rezoning requests submitted for second reading. Lastly, new Lexington County Council Representative Michael Bishop attended and stated that he planned to regularly attend meetings in all of his area districts and will rotate attendance. He was formerly the Mayor of Springdale. He would like to promote growth while avoiding associated problems, work on addressing dirt roads, trash pick-up and farm development. He invited contact if anyone needs his help with services.

**Regular Meeting, Richland/Lexington 5 School Board, 3/10/25 (Katherine Myers)**

Superintendent Ross displayed a flow chart/monthly calendar of meetings which support the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. Elementary schools will be more affected by the rezoning than the high schools. The district requested that Board members consider Magic AI funding district-wide; it is an app that will be accessible by all staff and students. Board member Skelly asked for examples of “individualized learning” from Horry County to inform the Board’s evaluation for Lex/Rich 5. A March Madness attendance initiative has been implemented district-wide in hopes that it will reduce chronic absenteeism district wide. A non-profit traveling basketball organization asked the board for reduced rental fees on district gyms. Four action agendas passed 6/0. Three discussion agendas were presented by the CFO, Ms. Tucker. She noted that the district must try to protect its credit rating in the event federal Title fund and magnet grant monies are terminated. She then suggested adjusting “reserve funds” to 3 months instead of the 2 months currently allocated. Finally, she recommended a one-time forensic audit of District 5 to be sure monies are spent properly and that allocations close out responsibly.

**Regular Meeting, Lexington District 4 School District, 3/10/25 (Susan and Stephanie Phillips)**

There were no speakers for public forum. Swansea Freshman Academy completed a presentation highlighting their activities. District 4 has one teacher that is a nominee for teacher of the year. There was a presentation on technology updates and safety. The fiscal report indicates that the district's budget is in line and any impact related to changes at the Dept of Education is currently unknown. Lastly, Dr Nutter, School Superintendent, reviewed policies related to Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying, the Code of Conduct, and Lexington 4's Discipline Policy.

**Regular Meeting, Richland Two School Board, 3/11/25** (Sara Phillips, virtual observation)

Before the regular meeting began, members of the public made comments regarding budget planning for the new school year. Employees from various areas in the district spoke about the need for increased salary for those working in the schools who were not teachers. This included nurses, behavioral analysts, and speech therapists. Presenters noted the difficulty recruiting and retaining people for these positions due to the low pay rate compared to what someone in these professions would make outside of the school setting.

Next, Alton Raven, a community member, brought it to the attention of the board that 2027 will mark the 100th anniversary of the formation of Dentsville Consolidated School. He presented the history of that school, various changes, and how the property was acquired. Dentsville Consolidated School was on the property where Dent Middle School currently stands. He was asking the board to consider planning an event to recognize this milestone.

The board next approved the purchase 6.51 acres of new property within the district. Last, the school calendar committee presented the recommended calendar for the 2026-2027 school year. Three options had been presented to the faculty and Richland Two families. Calendar B received the most votes. The board will review this option and make a final decision at the next meeting.

**Regular Meeting, Forest Acres City Council, 3/11/25** (Melanie Trimble)

The meeting began with public hearing on two issues: an ordinance regulating business overnight hours of businesses, and a home annexation. Both passed. Promotions and hirings were celebrated, including a new dispatcher, victims advocate, detective, finance director, and assistant City Administrator.

Speeding enforcement continues on Clemson Road near Crayton Middle School. The Hospitality tax funding request for \$5000 for the Therapy Place Race event on May 3<sup>rd</sup> was approved. The council discussed an ordinance regarding 2025 elections and deadlines for publishing announcements re the election. There is a vacancy on the municipal elections commission. No applications have been received. This is a high priority, and they need to select an applicant by April. The public is encouraged to consider applying.

The City Administrator reported that the site of the former Richland Mall is almost cleared. They are going to take out much of the parking garage but leave an inner square of the garage. The apartments are going to wrap around the square of parking, and the ground floor will be for retail parking. They had to deal with some issues of the hill, such as erosion around the edges of the garage. They are now about 3 weeks behind having all the demo and debris cleared. Spring rain weather may add to that delay. Other activities include budgeting, planning a Forest Acres sign, wrapping up the last of the tree servicing, and redesigning Citadel Park around the tree removals. Business license renewals need to happen by end of April or there's a late fee; these can be done online.

April 5th is Sweep the Acres, from 8:30 am to 11:30am, followed by a cookout in the Lowes food parking lot. This is a community- wide cleanup effort. MUSC has partnered and is helping sponsor the event.

The Police Chief reported that most crimes are down over the last five years, aside from larceny and shoplifting. Car break-ins are down since 2022. Accidents are down as well. It seems the police presence is helping some crime statistics trend down, when national trends are up.

During the community forum, Mr. Willis, of Havana Circle, described concerns about Ravenwood Hills Apts. and the whole area of Covenant and Bethel Church Roads. These concerns include trash, an abandoned truck, and general disrepair. There are also many homeless people trying to find places to sleep. The question was asked about what had happened to the money from Covenant Crossing. Finally, Ms. Davis, of Brenthaven Road, expressed continued concerns about storm water runoff at the construction near Satchelford and Valleybrook.

### **Regular Meeting, Irmo Town Council Meeting, 3/18/2025, (Nicole Sanchez)**

In this very short meeting, the Town Council appointed a new Mayor Pro-Tem, Dr Barbara Waldman. They also annexed property into the Town limits and cleaned up some ordinances related to signage. Then, in a culmination of years of work, they approved the budget for the new Town Hall. Additionally, they approved the submission of a grant for

police training equipment and a road closure request for the yearly Young Chapel's Community Yard Sale.

During the Presentation by Citizens, the former Mayor, Barry Walker, spoke against the resolution in support of instant runoff voting. Yours truly (without my pin), refuted his assertions. Another citizen of Irmo encouraged the Council to better advertise their events at Rawls Creek Park.

**Regular Meeting, Cayce City Hall, 3/19/25 (Amy Mikell)**

There was discussion and approval of establishing new municipal district lines based on the 2020 census. These determine which council members represent those citizens. The goal is to have around 3500 citizens per district. Council then approved a contract with Raftelis Financial Consultants, and two appointments: one for the Board of Zoning Appeal and the other for the Museum Commission.

During council comments, Byron Thomas asked for his constituents to tell him what kinds of events they wish to see so that he can support them. Hunter Sox described the upgrades to Glenwood Park. He suggested that during the grand opening, local high school basketball players should be invited to shoot baskets with local children. Phil Carter related that, while tournaments usually require a month's notice, organizers of a recent pickleball tournament didn't reach out for approval until the day before. He praised the city employees who scrambled to meet that request despite the late notice. The tournament was successfully held the next day. Finally, Mayor Elise Parton praised the new kayak launch site, which is handicap-accessible, and noted the new availability of Wi-Fi in city parks. Families with limited internet connection at home can use those facilities.

**Regular Meeting, Lexington 2 School Board, 3/20/25 (Amy Mikell)**

There was an unusually large crowd attending the meeting due to the number of student recognitions to be made. Winners in the district art show were announced, and a video showcasing the honor band, honor chorus, talented and gifted theater, and honor orchestra was shown. Saluda River and Busbee Elementary were among sixty state schools to attain ABC status: Arts in Basic Curriculum. This designation provides \$12,500 a year to purchase supplies and provide artists in residence, for example. Brooke Hyatt, a first-year 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Cayce Elementary School, has been named "S.C. Induction Teacher of the Year."

During the superintendent's report she recognized the excellence of both high school's student governments. Both presidents described a joint project to encourage more student engagement: a special pass (\$2 rather than \$8) for games and matches. The director of instruction then introduced the first district student to earn course credits for passing an exam rather than completing a course. He immigrated from Mexico when he was 7 years old and had been immersed in English to the point that he had lost mastery of his native language. In perfect English, he explained that by earning credit for Spanish I, II, and III, he had been able to reconnect with his personal history, something "...you never want to forget."

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## **16. MEMBER CORNER**

Margaret Jenkins, a member of our league and the sister of Keller Barron, passed away on March 12, 2025. Click [HERE](#) to see her full obituary.

Led by Pat Forbis, the following people met at the home of Lill Mood to discuss judicial reform of SCOTUS. Their consensus, along with other groups from across the state, will be sent to LWVSC to be compiled and sent on to LWVUS. Seated are Donna Simmons, Lill Mood, and Marianne McGrath. Standing are Katherine Myers, Tracie DiPasquale, Pat Forbis, and Carole Walker. Not shown are Susan Cirulli and Sharon Ayling.

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## **16. CONTACTS**

#### OFFICERS

President	Christine Hait	2024-25
1st Vice President	David Smith	2023-25
2nd Vice President	Mary Edmonds	2024-26
Secretary	Sally Boyd	2023-25
Treasurer	Christina Goodwin	2024-26

#### DIRECTORS

Government Liaison	Missy Caughman	2024-26
Observer Corps	Amy Mikell	2024-26
Publicity	Anita Baker	2024-26
Women and Gender Equity	Laura Woliver	2023-25
Voter Participation	Aisha Jones	2024-25
VOTE411	Gloria Prevost	2023-25
Membership	Nicole Sanchez	2024-26
Communications	Susan Cirulli	2024-26

#### OFF-BOARD COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Education K-12	Kathryn Brookins
Environmental Affairs	Frances Eargle, Elaine Cooper
Nominating Committee	Marianne McGrath
Reproductive Health	vacant
Transportation	vacant
Voter Education	Cynthia Flynn, Lill Mood
Vote411 Co-Chair	Keller Barron

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