



June 2025 League Lines

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1. [CALENDAR](#)

*Please note that there will **NOT** be a June board meeting. Christine will email board members regarding outstanding tasks.*

Also note that there will not be a July League Lines. The August issue will be sent out near the end of July.

League

Monday, June 2 (5:00 – 6:00 pm): **LWVSC Legislative Update** (Zoom). Registration link will be sent by email. Presented by LWVSC lobbyists (and LWVCA members): *Lynn Teague, Dr. Janelle Rivers, Teresa Arnold.*

Thursday, June 5 (6:30 – 7:30 pm): **Membership Committee Meeting** (Zoom). Contact Nicole Sanchez.

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

Friday, June 20 (12noon): **Municipal Visits Team**, Emilie's Salad Bar, Bldg. 7, Still Hopes. Contact Gloria Prevost or Keller Barron.

Tuesday, July 22 (1:00 – 2:00 pm) – VOTE411 at Still Hopes Guignard Mansion Dining Room in person/Zoom. Please note the committee will **not** meet in June. Contact Gloria Prevost or Keller Barron.

Local Elections

Tuesday, June 3 (7:00 am – 7:00 pm) – Town of Irmo Special Election (Town Council). Go to [VOTE411](#) for details.

2. PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



May was a busy month with two important events taking place: the LWVSC state convention on May 16 and 17 and our local League's annual meeting on May 22. It was gratifying to have many of our members participate in one or the other or both of these events. For me personally, it was a pleasure at both events to get a chance to visit with many of you. I want to share with you some of the highlights of one of those events, the state convention.

Our League was well represented at the state convention. We were assigned sixteen delegates, the largest number as we are the largest League in the state. We also had a number of observers in attendance. The delegates had the responsibility of voting on items of business on the convention's agenda, including the LWVSC budget, the LWVSC program for 2025-2027, and the slate of nominees for the LWVSC board. Three members of our League were included on the slate of nominees that was approved by the delegates: Lynn Teague for Vice-President, Issues and Action; Laurel Suggs for Treasurer; and myself for Director of Member Services.

The convention provided those in attendance the opportunity to hear a number of speakers and to attend one of a number of workshops offered on the second day of the convention. Our League's Environment Committee hosted a workshop on the topic "Climate Change and Resiliency: Is South Carolina Ready?" This workshop included a

representative from the SC Office of Resiliency, the Vice-Chair of the City of Charleston's Resilience & Sustainability Advisory Committee, and members of the LWV Charleston Area's Environmental Study Group. Kudos to Elaine Cooper and Frances Eargle for providing the leadership that made this timely and well-received workshop possible.

The moment that stood out for me above all others was when it was announced at the convention that the winner of the Sarah Leverette Award was our own Keller Barron. Keller joined the LWV in the mid-1950s and chaired the national campaign to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s. She was also during this time elected twice to the LWVUS board. Today she continues as an active member of our League and focuses her efforts on Vote411. All who know Keller know that she is an inspiration. We can all be proud to be "in league" with this remarkable woman. I know I am.

My term as president of our local League ends on July 1. I will be moving on to my new position on the LWVSC board. I am delighted that Sara Phillips will become the new president of our League. I look forward to you all getting to know her. She is terrific! I am grateful to her for her leadership, and I am grateful to our board members, both those that served this past year and those that are joining the board on July 1, for their leadership. Although I will be serving on the state board, our local League is my home, and I look forward to seeing you all at events in the months ahead and continuing to work side-by-side with you to "empower voters and defend democracy."

In League,

Christine Hait

Keller Barron with the 2025 Sarah Leverette Award.

3. ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

Our annual meeting was definitely a success! Over 50 people attended and had a good time while passing important items.

A quick summary:

1. The 2025-26 budget was approved
2. Changes to bylaws were approved
3. Our Local Program for FY 2025-26 was approved

4. The slate of new officers was accepted (terms run from 7/1/2025 - 6/30/2027):

Position	New	Previous
President	Sara Phillips	Christine Hait
1st Vice President	Kathryn Brookins	David Smith
Secretary	Katherine Myers	Sally Boyd
Director: Voter Participation	Tracey Lee	Aisha Jones
Director: VOTE411	Janet Wedlock	Gloria Prevost

Christine Hait also gave a summary of what happened at the LWV South Carolina convention, and Pat Forbis briefly summarized the Federal Judiciary Study work that many members participated in.

4. MIDLANDS GIVES



Thank you to all who gave and helped spread the word about Midlands Gives this year. The League of Women Voters of the Columbia Area exceeded our goal of \$2000, raised \$3552 on Midland Gives Day, and brought in \$700 of match money to help incentivize giving.

These funds will help to support the LWVCA's efforts to register and educate voters in the Midlands.

5. ACTION BY LEAGUE MEMBERS HELPS RETURN BOOK TO LEX_RICH 5 SCHOOLS

Four League members - Kathryn Brookins, Lill Mood, Katherine Myers, and Sharon Ayling - attended the May 19 school board meeting to return the book, I am Billie Jean King, to the library. It is part of a series of biographies about famous people.

Kathryn Brookins gave prepared remarks (included below) describing her experiences as a teacher, and seven additional members of the public requested that the book be made

available again to students. At the conclusion of the statements from the public, Superintendent Dr. Akil Ross agreed to return the book to the library.

Kathryn Brookins' Remarks

“Good evening and thank you for allowing me to speak. I am a former D5 teacher, am zoned for D5, and my preschool aged son will attend D5 schools. I just read an article in *The State* newspaper about the banning of a book about Billie Jean King.

“One of the positions I had in LR5 was teaching in a special education preschool program. A unit in the curriculum was learning about families. Part of what I was evaluated on was displaying family photos that students brought in. One of my students had two mothers in a same sex relationship. Following the logic of shielding students from homosexual relationships, I would have had to single out my one student and remove the photo of his family and stop him from sharing information about his family while other students were able to share about theirs.

“The families and students that make up LR5 are varied and diverse. All should be respected and treated with dignity. It is not the school district's job to determine which families and individuals should be celebrated, and which ones should not. It is unacceptable to make students feel like they themselves or their families are less than just because they are or have parents who are part of the LGBTQ community. In removing a children's book just because there is a gay character, the district is implying that being gay is wrong and shameful. That may be the opinion of some individuals, but gay people exist, regardless of opinion and their existence should not be censored.

“You said it is up to parents to answer the question of what are romantic feelings in an age-appropriate way. I don't have a problem with that. But why is it that you're only banning a book with a gay character? What about the romance in Rapunzel, Snow White, or Sleeping Beauty?

“I want my son to be able to manage living in a diverse and multicultural world. I want him to be able to work with and develop friendships with people who are different from him. Learning about other perspectives and being respectful of people who are not like him is part of what will be necessary for him to be successful in his future. I fear what else D5 will choose to censor next. We need to celebrate similarities and respect differences. Banning a children's book that mentions being gay is not that. It is not fair to be tolerant and accepting of some people, while censoring the acknowledgment of others. I hope LR5 will put I am Billie Jean King by Brad Meltzer back on library shelves.

“Thank you.”

6. 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

Contact Anne Mellen for additional details.

7. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Join us for our next Membership Committee Meeting on Wednesday, June 5 at 6:30 PM via Zoom!

We'll be discussing our current initiatives and exploring strategies to expand our membership. This is an exciting opportunity to help grow the League's capacity. More members mean more energy, more ideas, and more impact.

Whether you're a longtime member or just getting involved, your voice matters. Let's work together to build a stronger, more vibrant League!

RSVP two ways: email Nicole Sanchez or simply add it to your Google calendar.

Questions? Reach out to Nicole. We hope to see you there!

8. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Environment Committee Activities

Climate Change

On May 17th, the Environment Committee hosted a climate change workshop at the LWV's State Convention, entitled "Climate Change and Resiliency: Is South Carolina Ready?" The workshop was well-attended featuring external speakers: Hope Warren, Director of Communications, SC Office of Resiliency and Dr. Stewart Weinberg, Vice-

Chair, City of Charleston, Resiliency and Sustainability Advisor. Also speaking on the Panel were League members from Charleston: Judith Kramer, LWVCA Chair, Environmental Study Group; Linda Ashley, LWVCA ESG Food Recycling Advocate; and Nicki Turano, LWVCA ESG Education Program Coordinator.

The workshop featured presentations on local actions that can be taken to lessen the impact of climate change and promote community resilience. The group expressed interest in beginning dialogue and exchanging information on climate change and resiliency. We anticipate starting that discussion in June.

Lower Richland Community Environmental Justice Outreach

Upcoming, we are planning another meeting with Lower Richland communities the last week of July, in partnership with the SC Office of Resiliency, to give voice to their historic environmental justice concerns and address environmental and public health disparities.

Environment in the News

State

The controversial “SC Energy Security Act” (H. 3309) passed the legislature to address expanded energy sources, which also includes provisions to streamline approval of energy projects and address environmental concerns and private property rights. It also authorizes a joint venture with Santee Cooper and Dominion Energy to build a natural gas-fired generation facility. The consumer impacts include potential rate increases (~18%); loss of landowner rights against eminent domain; and the implications for data centers, a significant energy user in the state.

Federal

The “No Rogue Rulings Act of 2025” (H.R. 1526), which passed the House and is under consideration in the Senate, aims to limit the judiciary's authority to issue nationwide injunctions and oversight. The specific impacts of the passage of this bill would inhibit the judiciary branch from providing effective remedies and check executive overreach, potentially weakening the federal courts' power. If passed, it would enable the Administration to push back on any decision it does not like by seeking an end to nationwide injunctions. It's essential to contact your Senators in opposition to this bill moving forward.

Trump Administration Ordered to Restore Environmental Grant Funds

On May 16th, the Federal District Court Judge Richard Gergel of South Carolina ordered the Trump Administration to restore \$176 million in grants to 13 nonprofits and municipalities across the Country. This is a monumental case to restore grants for important environmental and climate change work not only in SC but nationwide.

We would like to pursue any opportunities to grow our partnerships to help the environment and empower citizens to advocate for clean air and water at the ballot box as a critical part of our democracy. For more information or to share any ideas you have, contact Franni Eargle or Elaine Cooper.

Make a positive difference and join us!

9. EDUCATION/OBSERVER CORPS JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

The Education Committee did not meet in May. However, on Monday, May 19, several League members attended the Lexington Richland 5 school board meeting to support speakers who succeeded in encouraging the school district to reverse the banning of the children's picture book, I am Billie Jean King by Brad Meltzer. (See [#5](#) above).

Our next meeting will be **Wednesday, June 11, 2025**, at 10 am at the Richland Main Library. We will discuss the recent book ban attempt and the law they tried to rely on to ban it, school board openings in surrounding districts, and opportunities for teacher and school staff voter registration. Contact Kathryn Brookins or Amy Mikell.

10. VOTE411 COMMITTEE

The next Vote411 Committee meeting will be at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at Still Hopes Guignard Mansion Dining Room (in person) or via Zoom. Contact Gloria Prevost or Keller Barron. Please note VOTE411 will not meet in June.

VOTE411 for Upcoming Elections

Do you live in Irmo? Or know someone who does?

There are approximately 9,000 persons of voting age living within the incorporated area of the town of Irmo.

June 3 is the Special Election for Irmo Town Council. Check [VOTE411.org](https://vote411.org) by putting in your address to see if you live in the town of Irmo; and in order to cast an informed vote, check the candidates' responses to our LWVCA questions.

11 OBSERVER CORPS REPORTS

May 2025

Special Meeting, Lexington County Board of Elections, 5/2/25 (David Smith)

To mitigate the growing threat of a DOJ lawsuit, the Lexington County BOE has been investigating the use of high schools to replace some (or all) precinct poll locations for Election Day voting. Such implementation would require a change in state law. This action is being driven by increased DOJ enforcement of the ADA, the Americans with Disabilities Act. Lexington County has many poll locations with inadequate access for the disabled, particularly in the more rural areas. The cost of upgrading, which is prohibitive, would have to be borne by the counties, not the states. High schools are already ADA compliant and have ample paved parking. They would be known as "Community Voting Centers," or CVCs.

This Special Meeting of the BOE was called to discuss the use of CVCs and to receive input from Howard Knapp, Executive Director of the SC State Election Commission (SEC). Also attending was Senator Russell Ott. Lenice Shoemaker (Exec Director, Lex Registration and Elections) presented cost details for three options: 15, 35, and 45 CVCs. The 35 and 45 options included combinations of 15 high schools, churches, and current poll locations.

The 45 CVC option was successfully demonstrated when precincts were combined for the Presidential Preference Primaries in 2024.

Conclusions and Actions:

CVCs will likely not be used for this year's municipal elections. Many details, including legislation, still need to be worked out. Senate Bill 36 (SB36), which was partially addressing CVCs, is expected to be deferred to the next session. The BOE will engage County Council and the Lexington County Legislative Delegation to discuss the legal risks, costs, and to coordinate next steps. This meeting could occur in June.

Mr. Knapp complemented Lexington County for being the first county in SC to generate such detailed solutions to meet the ADA compliance challenge. The SEC will perform additional location-based (GIS) analysis of Lexington's three options.

The Board and Mr. Knapp agreed that the biggest challenge is how to mitigate voters (particularly the disabled) from feeling disenfranchised by the longer driving distance versus their usual polling location. One idea was to set up a county-wide hotline for voters to get a nonprofit / company-sponsored ride.

Lexington County BOE welcomes suggestions from LWVCA regarding ideas to mitigate voter disenfranchisement if (when) CVCs are implemented.

Regular Meeting, Lexington County Board of Elections, 5/2/25 (David Smith)

Irmo's Special Election is to be held on June 3. The county's voting equipment will be tested mid-May, and the public test is May 29 at 9am. The Lexington County Registration and Elections Office will be the one Early Voting Center; certification is June 5.

Next, Irmo's Municipal General Elections are on Nov 4. Polling locations are currently being verified, and results will be sent to the Municipalities in early May. Candidate filing is Aug. 1 – 15. County voting equipment will be tested Sept 29 – Oct 17; the public test is Oct 30. The Lexington County Registration and Elections Office will be the one Early Voting Center. Certification is Nov. 6.

While the board's outreach efforts were not discussed, the agenda reported that Carolyn Harness, a staff member who has been coordinating with Voter Participation, has gone to Brookland Cayce High School (4/29), Airport HS (4/30), Pelion HS (4/30). It was announced that the SEC can provide a practice ballot machine to help educate voters.

Finally, Denice Shoemaker, Executive Director of the Board, was congratulated on her winning the Planning and Emergency Response Award from Clearing House. She is only one of 53 such recipients in the nation! Note that the next BOE meeting will be held on June 5, 2025.

Regular Meeting, West Columbia City Council, 5/6/25 (Amy Mikell)

Various proclamations were approved including the 5th annual Asian American and Pacific Islander Business Day (5/27), Police Week (5/11/17), National Public Works Week (5/18-24), and Building Safety Month. Mayor Tem Miles elaborated on the salute to public works by telling of his visit with elementary students. He asked if they ever had any dealings with city government, to which they all answered, "No." He then explained that

every time they turn on water, flush, or leave trash out they are connecting with the department that has more contact with the public than any other. He added how important it is that the public understand and appreciate the work of these public servants.

Following was old business approval of five items, and nine items of new business. Among the latter was approval of Crescent Industries to handle storm damage repairs to the West Columbia Riverwalk. The mayor noted that the plan had to get FEMA approval for such things as the source of fill before the city can be reimbursed. Repairs are forecast to be completed well within the required 120 days.

Finally, during discussion of an ordinance concerning transportation facilities, it was noted that the location of one such facility was at the city limits near a dirt road. The mayor called the road, the last one in Lexington County, a “treasure.” Broad grins from council ensued.

Regular Meeting, Richland Two School Board meeting, 5/13/25 (Sara Phillips)

The board meeting opened with a performance from the Conder Elementary Superstar Strings group. Next came presentations of various award winners, students and teacher, for the 2024-25 school year.

The third quarter financial statements were presented. It was noted that the line item for reading coaches is in the negative by \$350,000. This is due to the district distributing a set amount that does not fully cover the increasing need for reading coaches. Funds from the general fund will need to cover the deficit.

The next board meeting will be on May 27 at 5:30 for the executive session and 6:30 for the general public.

Regular Meeting, Lexington Two School Board, 5/15/25 (Amy Mikell)

This 2 ½ hour meeting began by recognizing a 7th grader whose essay won first place over thousands of applications from all over the nation. The InvestWrite Competition challenges young writers to explore the value of financial literacy. The winning student thanked his teachers and above all his mother.

Next, 20 seniors from both high schools who are enlisting in the military were honored. Both high school principals then introduced 15 outstanding seniors from the Class of 2025, consisting of 550 students. One young man attained a GPR of 5.53, a score the board chairman declared he didn't even know was possible.

During the financial report, finance director Skye Strickland noted that their budget office has scored a “ten” on the State Department’s Risk Assessment, a perfect score being a “nine.” Board member Tre Bray then that the \$300,000 allotted for upkeep of iPads for first and second graders may need to be examined in light of recent reports about the dangers of excessive screen time for young kids.

During the lengthy discussion of the 2025-26 budget, it was noted that salaries and fringe benefits account for 83% of expenditures. Also discussed was how the district is meeting the needs of its numerous ML (Multi-language) students. In addition to providing ML coaches for teachers and interpreters for the classrooms, teachers also are able to utilize AI to create lesson plans in whatever language is required.

The next topic was the policy for student promotion and retention. The State of S.C. now requires that students not reading at grade level by the end of third grade must be retained. This is true despite credible studies that show that kids who are held back a grade are 95% more likely to drop out of school. The district counteracts the problem by providing tutoring and summer reading camps. These measures have been very successful for low-income students.

Regular Meeting, Columbia City Council, 5/20/25 (Paula Walters)

Mayor Rickenmann brought the meeting to order, announcing the chamber was at capacity, and late arrivals could watch via livestream in another location.

A resolution honored the late Ezekiel H. Trezevant Jr., a pioneer in the funeral industry. Koon Rd. & a portion of Prescott Rd. will be renamed in his memory. His family was present to accept the honor.

The Public Works Department enlivened the meeting w/a video featuring several employees dancing to M.C. Hammer's "U Can't Touch This" as they completed various tasks. Staff members also held up signs which spelled out “Columbia” as Director Robert Anderson provided a definition for each letter. His descriptions emphasized some of the vital jobs the department completes 24/7. This interlude was a moment of light-heartedness that was needed given the gravity of public input regarding the possible repeal of Ordinance 2021-021, the ban on conversion therapy.

To begin that discussion, City Manager Teresa Wilson read a letter from Sen. Tameika Isaac Devine, urging the council to keep the ordinance in place.

Next came time for public comments. Thunderous applause followed most of the almost two dozen speakers who opposed its repeal. This prompted Mayor Rickenmann to

discourage the clapping to shorten the meeting. The audience disregarded his suggestion.

The council then considered the consent agenda which included twelve items for approval from various departments. Members approved over \$1.5 million for equipment, information technology, and Columbia water. Under zoning & planning matters, council approved twenty properties for annexation and/or rezoning.

Regarding Ordinance 2021-021, Mayor Rickenmann proposed a vote delay and received unanimous consent. He also directed the City Manager to sequester hospitality & accommodations tax funds as the city completes the budget before July 1. This proposal was a response to a legislative threat to withhold close to \$4 million from the city if Ordinance 2021-021 stays in place.

As the meeting neared the two-and-one-half hour mark, the council hastily concluded with referrals of various projects & programs to the Minority Business Council, Economic Development & Infrastructure Committee as well as Community Development.

Regular Meeting, City of Cayce, 5/21/25 (Amy Mikell)

A highlight of the meeting was the swearing in of the new police chief, Bruce Wade. The ceremony was attended by a large number of police officers from around the Midlands, who came to show their support for Chief Wade and for the city.

Next came the first reading of the 2025-26 budget. The budget drew praise from Councilman Tim James. He noted that citizens of Cayce receive premium service at a reasonable rate. Councilman Phil Carter observed that he had been part of overseeing 18 previous budgets, and this one was the most outstanding one. Hunter Sox added that it was the most transparent, sensible budget he had ever worked with, and Byron Thomas expressed his gratitude that the new budget wouldn't unduly burden his constituents.

The five councilmen and Mayor Elise Parton praised the hard work and effectiveness shown by City Manager Jim Crosland and Finance Director Kelly McMullen. Ironically, both of these employees are leaving their positions for better situations. Mr. Crosland will be the new city manager for Irmo, where he both resides and has worked in years past. Ms. McMullen is taking a position in the private sector.

During council comments, Councilman Thomas bragged on the success of a recently refurbished park. He noted how encouraging it is to drive by and see kids of all races and

genders playing together. He also made the request for more basketball goals, saying that having them would be “sweeter than sweet tea.”

Finally, Mayor Partin suggested that for the sake of transparency, the job description for city manager could be discussed in public rather than reserved for the executive session. Two councilmen objected, after which she said, “If council doesn’t want to take a vote on it, doesn’t want to be transparent, that’s fine,” Partin said. “We’re very transparent,” James responded. Unfortunately, some acrimony remains between the mayor and the council.

Regular Meeting, Irmo Town Council, 5/22/25 (Nicole Sanchez)

The meeting opened with students from Irmo Elementary leading the pledge of allegiance. Eyler Piano was honored as the Small Business of the Month and Dave Toole was honored for his contributions to the Board event that took place in Rawls Creek Park, Irmo’s newest park. Palmetto Citizen sponsored the event and was also honored. The Okra Strut presented scholarships to two young men at the Juneteenth Festival at Macedonia Baptist Church on June 19.

Council next voted to suspend Robert's Rules so they could go into executive session at that time instead of at the end of the agenda. They met with the town lawyer on the hiring of a new town administrator. Courtney Dennis, the current town administrator, recently submitted his notice to take a job in the private sector.

When council returned to public session, they voted to approve a new administrator. Jim Crosland, formerly of Cayce, will take up his new post on July 7. This was a surprisingly fast turnaround.

The rest of the meeting had the four council members quickly approving a change to the time of the council meetings and finalizing the upgraded payment scale for council members (not to take effect until after the November election). They also approved the budget and annexed some parcels into the town.

They gave first reading to three ordinances. They first changed the off-street parking regulations and then approved a water main transplant to accommodate the Broad River widening project. Lastly, they approved the ride vendor for the Okra Strut.

12. MEMBER CORNER

Columbia League Annual Meeting and Social

What a great turnout for our annual meeting and social, held Thursday, May 22, 2025, at Laurel Suggs's home! Thanks to Laurel for hosting and Sharon Ayling for taking these photos.

State Convention

Thanks to Sharon Ayling for the following pictures:

13. 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
Voter Education	Cynthia Flynn. Lill Mood
Vote411 Co-Chair	Keller Barron



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