

President's Message

The South Carolina Legislature has a month to go and many bills to take up. They will pass a budget with a salary increase for public school teachers and law enforcement personnel. We have been following the abortion ban and find again the House and Senate bills do not agree. The Senate Education subcommittee scheduled a hearing on H3728 dealing with what can be taught



Linda Gahan

in the public schools, moved the date, canceled the hearing, rescheduled the hearing but gave incorrection information of where to submit written testimony. Public libraries in the state are having to deal with residents who want to ban books. School libraries have parents who wants certain books out of sight. We have many opportunities to advocate for our positions on women's reproductive rights and other legislative issues. Be informed, talk with your legislators, and let them know where you stand. This is league in action.

April's LWVOP program will feature **Darren Linville** and **Patrick Warren** talking about a training platform they are helping to build to detect scams, deceptions and outright lies on social media. They spoke to us earlier about trolling efforts to spread disinformation and misinformation on the internet. Now with the use of artificial intelligence and the ability to imitate a person's voice, we are challenged to know what is real.

Our annual meeting is May 9 at Occasion's Event Center in Central at 6 p.m. It will feature a social hour, a delicious meal, a short business meeting and **Heidi Williams** will talk about the Green Crescent Trail. The cost for the meal is \$25. Make your reservations with **Cheryl Lee** (Cheryl_lee1234@bellsouth.net).

See you there!

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THE VOTER

League of Women Voters of Oconee and
Pickens Counties
P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29631
www.lwvop.org

OFFICERS:

Linda Gahan, President
Holley Ubrich, Vice-President
Ellie Taylor, Secretary
Elaine Laiewski, Treasurer

ELECTED DIRECTORS:

Kathy Bargeron
Carolyn Bishop-McLeod
Sandy Land
Janet Marsh
Sarah McNeill
Pat Spurlock
Cherie Walker

APPOINTED DIRECTORS:

Past President	Ruth Reed
Policy Advisor	Eleanor Hare
Policy Advisor	Janie Shipley
Voter Reg.	Cheryl Lee
Vote411	Alice Flower
Web Master	Allison Ranson
Web Master	Carol Asalon
NAACP Liaison	Shelia Crawford

Calendar of Events

April 13	Oconee Co. Board of Voter Registration and Elections Quarterly Board Meeting, Oconee Co. District Office, Walhalla, 10 a.m.
April 17	Oconee Co. School Board Meeting, Oconee Co. District Office, Walhalla, 6 p.m.
April 18	Oconee County Council, Oconee Co. Council Chambers, 415 South Pine St., Walhalla, 6 p.m.
April 18	LWVOP Program on "What's New in the Media Forensic Hub", 7 p.m., OLLI
April 24	Pickens County School Board, 1348 Griffin Mill Road, Easley, 6 p.m.
April 25	LWVOP Board Meeting, Zoom, 7 p.m.
April 29-30	LWVSC Biennial Convention, Double Tree Hotel, Columbia
May 9	LWVOP Annual Meeting, Occasions Event Center in Central, 6 p.m.
<i>OLLI Building</i>	<i>578 Issaqueena Trail, 100 Thomas Green Clemson Boulevard, Clemson (864-633-5242)</i>

Zoom Update

Now that we are meeting in person again at OLLI, **Pat Spurlock**, **Ken Marsh**, and I have been learning how to manage Zoom for our meetings so that those of you who cannot make the meeting in person can attend virtually. Thanks, everyone, for your patience! OLLI staff are most supportive, and we are still learning.

At our March meeting, we had about 12 on Zoom and over 20 in the room. We had to jury-rig the cameras and microphones for the panel discussion with one of the panel (**Eunice Lehmacher**) attending by Zoom. Zoom attendees reported that they could hear, but those in the live audience could not. We will continue to figure out how to manage the sound system.

A plea from our Vice President in charge of Programs, **Holley Ulbrich** -- Please attend in-person if you possibly can because a respectable in-person audience is more supportive for the speaker and generates more energy for the presentation. Not to mention being able to talk to each other in person!

Submitted by Ruth Reed

April Program – What’s New in the Media Forensic Hub?

Our April 18th meeting will welcome back two speakers from two years ago, **Patrick Warren** and **Darren Linville**. The title of their presentation is "What's New in the Media Forensic Hub?" They will focus on their current collaboration with SUNY Buffalo to build a training platform for seniors (or others as well) on how to spot scams, deceptions and outright lies on social media. Both Patrick and Darren are natives of the Upstate. Patrick is in the Economics Department and Darren is in Communications. Patrick joined the faculty in 2008 and Darren in 2009. They were recently awarded a large grant from the Knight Foundation to support their work on social media influences. See you at OLLI on April 18 at 7 p.m.

Submitted by Holley Ulbrich

Expansion of Medicaid: A Small but Growing Movement

Every new development starts with a beginning, sometimes a small beginning. Efforts to expand Medicaid to thousands of South Carolinians have begun, first with the announcement of a statewide coalition of over 16 organizations (CoverSC, chaired by LWVSC) and now with the development of local Medicaid expansion groups initiated by Leagues.

LWVOP’s Medicaid expansion group met twice in March and intends to continue its zoom meetings as it works to:

1. Learn about the current Medicaid program and what expansions entails, and
2. Prepare a presentation that will be shared with community groups and organizations in the Upstate.

Joining LWVOP in this initiative is LWV of Anderson. Soon we will invite other local individuals and organizations to join us, mirroring the LWVSC Coalition. We will also consider how we can best “market” Medicaid expansion in our three-county area.

Several recent events may contribute to our success. North Carolina’s Governor just signed into law a bill calling for expanded Medicaid effective June 1, making it the fortieth state to expand. Additionally, South Carolina has announced the removal of up to 300,000 citizens from Medicaid beginning in April, people who were allowed to stay on Medicaid during the pandemic. All medical facilities are on alert as to how they will deal with this large number of newly uninsured people.

Despite resistance to expansion by some South Carolina politicians, we are making a small but expanding effort to ensure basic health care insurance for all in our state. Please join us!

LWVOP Members Testify at Senate Committee

South Carolina H3728 Transparency and Integrity in Education: this bill has passed the House and is currently residing in the Senate Committee on Education. LWVSC does NOT support this bill; the ACLU of South Carolina [summarizes](#) the objections to the bill:

“H3728 contains harmful provisions that seek to prevent public educators from teaching the full truth of past and present race and gender inequalities in their classrooms, subject our public educators to undue surveillance of their instruction, burden our public educators with unnecessary complaint processes, and risk the loss of a significant amount of state funding for unjustified reasons.”

The Senate Committee on Education held a hearing on Wed., Mar 8, at 9:30 at the capital; **Shelia Crawford** and I drove down but arrived too late for a seat in the chamber. We stood in the lobby and watched the live stream amid the hubbub of people entering and leaving the Gressette Building, frustrated by the number of supporters of the bill who spoke. During the hour allotted for the hearing, only about half of those signed up to speak were able to do so; the chairman promised to hold a second hearing for the rest.

Afterwards, Shelia and I went with colleagues of hers from Greenville to meet **Sen. Karl Allen** of District 7 and a member of the Education Committee, an opponent of the bill. At his recommendation, we visited another committee member who might still be persuadable. We did; that member was not in the office, but we left our message with the very friendly office staff. Then Shelia and I visited our own **District 2 Sen. Rex Rice**, also on the Education Committee—a courteous but probably not very fruitful discussion. We returned home, frustrated, but resolved to return for the second half.

The second session was held at 9:30 am a week later, on Mar 15. Shelia, new member **Reba Kruse** of Pickens, and I made the trek again. This time, we arrived by 8:30 and were about fourth in line. Reba was first in line to speak, followed by our LWVSC education lobbyist, Janelle Rivers.

A few speakers later, Shelia spoke, giving a heartfelt description of growing up in the segregated school system of Greenville where she had the leftover books from the white schools, outdated, well-marked and missing pages, a testimony to the importance of the education system for all children. This time, the room was filled with opponents to the bill, giving strong testimony to the negative effects H3728 would have on the education system, but only 3 committee members were in attendance.

A highlight of these statehouse trips for me is the great conversations we have on the two-hour drive to and from. It means an early morning (we met in Easley at 6:15 am) but is well worth the trip. If you can manage the time, I highly recommend joining up with another League member and making the drive.

Submitted by Ruth Reed

Report on Pickens County Voter and Elections Board

The Pickens County Voter and Election Board met on Tuesday, March 7, 2023

A guest at the meeting made a comment about ERIC and a general discussion followed. South Carolina is one of the thirty-nine members of ERIC (The Electronic Registration Information Center), which assists member states to improve the accuracy of U.S. voter rolls and increase access to voter registration for all eligible citizens. ERIC is non-profit; it is governed and managed by those states who choose to join and was formed in 2012. It is supported by both Republicans and Democrats. Recently, the far right has been attacking this organization, and five states dropped out - Florida, Missouri, Virginia, Alabama and Louisiana.

Pickens Election Commission staff are making sure all election equipment is operable; some have been reconfigured. Scanners are operational. They are using a system, (EasyVote) purchased by the State Election Commission for fast-tracking inventory on election day and for maintenance. Early voting for Ward 4 in Easley begins April 10 for a special election for a council member. There are two candidates, seven precincts, one early voting site and three polling places. More than half of the county election commissions in South Carolina had new directors in the past year. There has been a huge turnover and much training is needed. More may be found in the SEC's 2022 *Annual Report* at <https://SCVotes.gov>.

A couple of the board members attended a South Carolina Association of Registration and Election Officials' meeting in Columbia:

- USPS has a special division for election mail. They prioritize this type of mail and have special bags for it.
- Rank Choice Voting* was discussed: By ranking choices, voters would eliminate the need for holding a runoff election. Doing so would save the state money and would increase the number of voters. (Runoff elections typically have low turnout.) However, ranked choice voting is difficult to explain to voters.
- Legislators have no appetite for implementing laws to protect election workers from harassment.

Further discussion: Clear Ballot is a company that is an outside check on election counts that recounts ballots. The Election Commission staff also hand-counted a random sample of ballots**. Results of Clear Ballot audits and hand-count audits for all counties and for the June 2022 Primaries, June 2022 Primary Runoffs, and November 2022 General Election are available at <https://scvotes.gov/elections-statistics/election-audits/>

*Five states currently use ranked-choice voting. Methodology varies; in general, the top four or five candidates in the primary are retained without regard for party and ranked-choice voting is used in the general election to avoid a runoff.

Submitted by Carol Asalon with review by Eleanor Hare and Ruth Reed

LWVOP Local Program

The following areas represent topics that represent priorities for our Local League.

Education

Adequate financing of education, greater fiscal autonomy for school boards, and structure of Pickens County School Board.

Position In Brief:

- The LWVOP believes our schools should be adequately financed. Therefore, we support increased taxes, if necessary, for Pickens and Oconee County schools.
- The LWVOP supports greater fiscal autonomy for the School Boards of Trustees in Pickens and Oconee Counties.

Growth Management

We support intentional and collaborative growth management in the two-county area (Oconee and Pickens) of South Carolina.

Position In Brief:

- We support intentional and collaborative growth management in the two-county area (Oconee and Pickens) of South Carolina.
- We encourage regular consultations among public agencies related to growth and development and local elected bodies -- city councils, county councils, and school boards. We also encourage an open and frequent dialogue between those agencies and the public on growth management.
- We support the concept of managing growth to preserve and enhance quality of life for all residents, old and new, through the effective and coordinated use of such land use management tools as conservation easements, purchase of development rights, development impact fees, and zoning where appropriate.

Representative Government

Support for odd number of members of committees, commissions, and councils and seven member Pickens County Council.

Position In Brief:

- We support that committees, commissions and councils consist of an odd number of voting members.
- We support increasing the membership of the Pickens County Council to seven members, elected from the same single-member districts as the School Board members.

Save the Date – May 9 LWVOP Annual Meeting

We are all looking forward to the annual LWVOP banquet held at Occasions in Central, South Carolina on May 9. Social hour begins at 6 p.m., with dinner at 6:30. We are fortunate to have as our speaker and league member **Heidi Williams** who will bring us up to date on the Green Crescent Trail. Put this date and time in your calendar now.

There will be a sign-up sheet at our next league meeting on April 18 where you can register the number of people attending. You are encouraged to pay in advance which will help our treasurer and shorten the line at the front desk. **The price is \$25 per person and the deadline for responding is May 1.** Bring your check to the April meeting or mail to P.O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633 or give to **Elaine Laiewski** at Clemson Community Care during business hours.

Additionally, you may text, email, or call **Cheryl Lee** to make a reservation by May 1.

Nominating Committee Report 2023-2024

The following is a list of proposed candidates from the Nominating Committee to be voted on at the Annual Meeting:

Co-President - Pat Spurlock	2023-2025
Co-President - Holley Ulbrich	2023-2024
Vice President for Program - Sandra Land (with Holley Ulbrich' help)	2023-2024
Secretary - Allison Ranson	2023-2024
Treasurer - Elaine Laiewski	2023-2025

Elected Board of Directors

Kathy Barger	2023-2025
Carolyn Bishop-McLeod	2023-2025
Elizabeth Vogt	2023-2025
Ruth Reed	2023-2025
Carol Asalon	2023-2024
Sarah McNeill	2023-2024

Nominating Committee 2023-2024: Ann Fuhr, Ansley Fraser, Ken Marsh

Submitted by Sarah McNeill, Chair, Allison Ranson, Bill Ranson, Sandy Rosche, Janet Marsh, and Cheryl Lee

Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024

INCOME	22-23 Budget	Proposed 23-24 Budget
Member Dues	\$4,590	\$4,410
Contributions	\$1,000	\$1,000
Fundraiser/Sales/Activities	\$1,300	\$1,300
LWVOP Reserve Funds	\$2,110	\$2,290
TOTAL INCOME:	\$9,000	\$9,000
EXPENSES		
LWVUS Per Member Payment	\$2,240	\$2,288
LWVSC Per Member Payment	\$980	\$1,001
State/National Meetings	\$1,400	\$1,550
Local Meetings	\$825	\$500
Annual Meeting	\$400	\$400
Printing *	\$800	\$1,350
Postage/Mailing	\$300	\$300
VOTE411	\$400	\$400
Website Hosting/URL	\$425	\$430
Membership Committee	\$100	\$100
Program/Action Committee	\$530	\$250
VoterEd/Services	\$100	\$150
Co-Presidents' Fund	\$500	\$281
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$9,000	\$9,000

*Increase due to publication of Directory of Public Officials

*Submitted by Sharon Fennel, Sandia Rosche, and Elaine
Laiewski*