

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

You have spoken. In January's meeting on state program planning, you chose health care, climate change and education as the educational program priorities you want the state league to work on. LWVOP has been focusing on health care and reproductive rights in the last two years.



Linda Gahan

We have had programs on climate change and recycling and an article by **Ted Volskay** in our *Voter*. Last fall, we had a program on teacher shortage, but we want to extend our focus to include teacher pay, book banning, vouchers, and the teaching of history in our public schools. LWVOP has a great committee working on health care and they plan to extend their study to Medicaid expansion this year. Our meeting on February 21 will feature a guest speaker, **Teresa Arnold**, who will speak on Medicaid expansion. She is coming all the way from Columbia to present this program so please try to attend. **Ellie Taylor** has been working with Ted Volskay as co-facilitators for the state league on Climate Change and the Environment Policy. We could use some additional LWVOP members to work with Ellie. **Bernadette Hampton** and **Holley Ulbrich** co-facilitate the education working group at the state level. LWVOP needs an education committee. Are you interested in whether public tax dollars are used to fund private education? Do you think books should be banned because someone is offended with the subject matter? Do you think the teaching of black history in the public school should be based on what happened? Should teacher pay be increased? What incentives can be used to recruit and retain teachers? If these issues grab your attention enough to draw you into action, please let me know. I will find a place for your energy and passion. Health care, climate, and education. These are our priorities.

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*THE VOTER*

League of Women Voters of Oconee and  
Pickens Counties  
P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29631  
<https://my.lwv.org/south-carolina/oconee-pickens-counties>

## OFFICERS:

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

## ELECTED DIRECTORS:

Kathy Barger  
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	Sheila Crawford

## Calendar of Events

February 7	LWVSC Advocacy Update for members with Lynn Teague, Zoom, 5 p.m. Registration required.
February 7	Pickens County Board of Voter Registration and Elections, District Administration Offices, Pickens, 4:30 p.m.
February 13	Oconee Co. School Board Meeting, Oconee Co. District Office, Walhalla, 6 p.m.
February 14	LWVUS 103rd Birthday - "People Powered League" Day of Action. Celebrate the League's 103rd birthday with us on Feb. 14 with a National Day of Action! Through storytelling, digital actions, local events, and advocacy, we will flex the breadth of our League people power and advance our priorities.
February 21	LWVOP Program on Medicaid Expansion in SC: "WE ALL WIN" with guest speaker Teresa Arnold, OLLI, 7 p.m.
February 27	Pickens County School Board Meeting, 1348 Griffin Mill Road, Easley, 6 p.m.
February 28	LWVOP Board Meeting, Zoom, 7 p.m.
<i>OLLI</i>	<i>578 Issaqueena Trail, 100 Thomas Green Clemson Boulevard, Clemson (864-633-5242)</i>

### Communications Team Visits with Pickens County Courier

As the Communications Team seeks greater public awareness for the League, two members of the Team recently visited with the publisher and the editor of the *Pickens County Courier*, **Rocky Nimmons** and **Zack Mauldin** respectively. Located in a small house in downtown Pickens, the weekly Wednesday paper publishes on-line and prints 6,000 copies.

Rocky Nimmons exudes an enthusiastic deep conviction about the importance of the paper to the Pickens County community. He attributes its successful longevity to its character ("we do what we say") and its integrity ("we state the truth"). Rocky has worked for a Pickens County paper for about 40 years, starting the Courier about 20 years ago. Both he and Zack assured us they would welcome news items from the League. We left their office deeply impressed with their dedication to serving the community. Most importantly, we were again aware of the importance of getting out from behind our computers and phones and meeting with people face-to-face, as we are able.

*Submitted by Janet Marsh and Ruth Reed*

## Preview of February Meeting: Medicaid Expansion in SC

### Is the Cost too High? Covering Medically Indigent in SC

Two years ago, we were told by three of our legislators at our monthly meeting that the state would not be expanding Medicaid to some of our poorest citizens because it would cost too much. How much?? They didn't know! (38 states had accepted the Feds offer to expand Medicaid, with the Feds paying 90% of costs for 10 years.)

Now we know, and a coalition of state organizations is ready with the answers, many of which point to the overall benefits to the health and well-being of citizens as well as benefits to the state economy and budget.

**PLEASE JOIN US:**

Medicaid Expansion in SC: WE ALL WIN  
Tuesday, February 21, 2023, 7:00 -8:15 p.m.  
OLLI at Clemson University  
100 Thomas Green Boulevard, Clemson, SC  
Speaker: Teresa Arnold, Chair Cover SC

CoverSC is a coalition of organizations that seeks to increase healthcare access for South Carolina workers and drive economic growth by passing Medicaid expansion. See its website, [coversc.org](http://coversc.org) for a list of coalition members, stories, and data about the benefits of expansion to 200,000 South Carolinians.

**Teresa Arnold**, MSW, retired from AARP SC as State Director in 2021, has more than 27 years of advocacy experience at the South Carolina General Assembly. She was awarded the Order of the Palmetto in 2022. She also received South Carolina NASW Social Worker of the year and USC College of Social Work Alum of the year. She was Chair of the Alliance for a Healthier SC. Teresa is on the LWVSC Board and serves as Health Care Policy Specialist.

### LWVOP's Social Media

Don't forget to check out the LWVOP website at [LWVOP.ORG](http://LWVOP.ORG) and the Facebook page at: <https://bit.ly/3EAGc11>.

Facebook may be accessed either through this link or go to the LWVOP homepage at [LWVOP.ORG](http://LWVOP.ORG). The LWVOP Calendar has been updated to include information for the following meetings in both Oconee and Pickens counties – Board of Voter Registration and Election Board, School Board meetings and the LWVSC Advocacy Team update. There is also a link on the LWVOP homepage to the State calendar.

## We Asked! You Answered!

How to share with you the wealth of information we received from our members in the fall 2022 survey?? These are the high points, but if you would like the brief full report, contact **Janet Marsh**.

Our intention is to try to address every comment in the survey, where it is deemed possible. Members with specific responsibility for an aspect of the League mentioned in the survey (Voter Services, the *Voter*, etc.) have been given the names of folks interested in their area. When there is not a specific member to whom we can refer responses, a group of members is looking at the responses and deciding how to address the response so that no member’s response is overlooked.

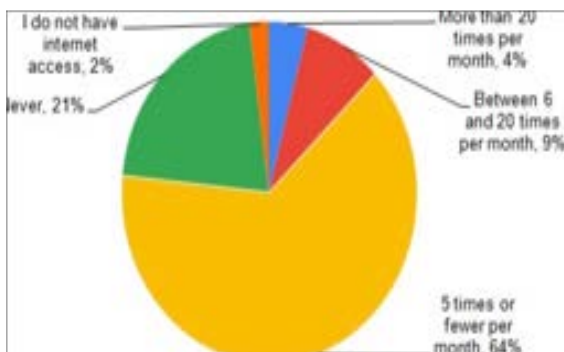
**The first four questions asked about willingness to serve in various capacities in the League (Monthly Programs, Organization, Advocacy on Specified Issues, and Specific Voter Services Areas).**

There is relatively minimal interest in the areas of Monthly Programs and Organization although almost half suggested topics for the meetings. Most respondents are interested in an Area of Advocacy with Voting Systems/Rights and Health Care the leading choices. Every respondent is interested in one of the 3 Voter Services areas (Registration, Forums, VOTE411).

**Member’s attention to the various ways LWVOP tries to communicate with them.**

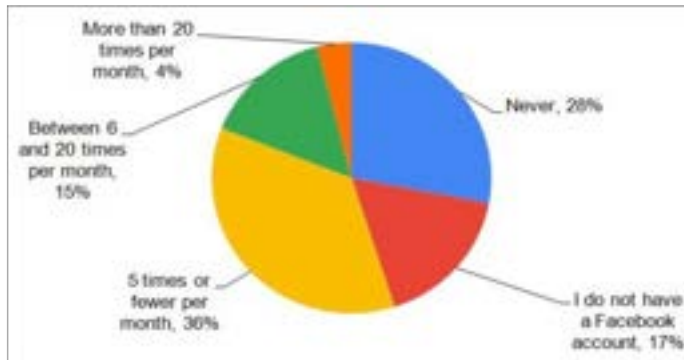


**Attendance at monthly meetings**



**Use of Zoom**

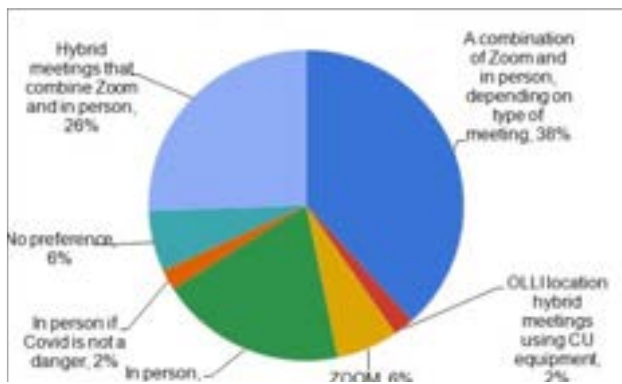
# We Asked! You Answered! Continued



Use of the website

Read the *Voter* – 85% of respondents read the monthly *Voter*, with 2/3 having no suggestion for improvement, and 1/3 suggesting some content changes/additions.

**Thoughts on how to improve LWVOP for its members** 18% no suggestion. Others suggested improving meetings, organization, diversity, and membership.



Members' preferences for in-person vs. zoom meeting

**Members who want to invest in equipment for hybrid in-person/virtual meetings:** YES, 53%, NO, 47%

This survey was conducted among 95 members of the LWVOP in August and September 2022. Response rate 50%. This included primarily the more active members. Non-respondents included many members who support LWV financially but are not actively involved, elderly members, and new members who felt they didn't know the LWV well enough.

## January's State and Local Program Planning Report

Our January meeting was an experiment—and like most experiments, some things went well, and some things helped us identify how to improve. The meeting was our biennial opportunity to tell the state board what changes we want to make in our positions and what kind of educational programming we need (in terms of supporting positions that we especially care about). We had an audience almost evenly divided between Zoom and in person, which made discussion and voting complicated! We put together a good team.

**Sandra Land, Ellie Taylor, Carolyn McLeod, and Eleanor Hare** gave us some thoughts to chew on about election management, health care, and environment, and Janie Shipley and Holley Ulbrich facilitated the meeting.

At the end, we had a report to state board recommending adding climate change to our environmental concerns and several edits to our health care positions. We recommended two changes to our election positions, eliminating the reference to source code and having more time between the election and the runoff (or ranked voting as an alternative to runoffs). We made a request for a statewide survey of staffing of county election commissions because both Oconee and Pickens appear to be understaffed with only two full-time staffers each. The State Election Commission tells them what they can and can't do in terms of election management but their budget and staffing come from the County Council. We also would like our Home Rule position to reflect that those self-governing entities that named streets and buildings be given the right to change them (that's school board, county councils, city councils, and state colleges and universities).

Finally, we got to pick our top three issues to recommend to state board for educational programming. Five issues were nominated: ranked choice voting, climate change, health care (especially Medicaid expansion and reproductive rights), education (especially teacher recruiting retention and pay, the teaching of history and book banning), and racial justice (including names of buildings and removal of statues). After overcoming the challenges of registering votes in a hybrid meeting, three emerged as clear favorites: health care, climate change, and education.

What happens next? The LWVOP board will edit and finalize the report and send it to state board which will compile results from all 13 local Leagues and make recommendations about changes in positions and areas of educational program emphasis. Even if State Board doesn't agree with a recommendation, it will be listed on the program at the convention in May and can be considered and adopted. That's how real grass roots democracy works!

We go through this exercise every odd-numbered year. In even-numbered years there is a national convention and a similar process, but the state one is always dearer to most of our hearts. So, we'll formulate our opinions and concerns again in January 2025, hopefully with fewer challenges to participation on Zoom and figuring out how best to vote. Many thanks to all for a lively discussion and some good thoughts about how we as a state League and be effective in a state that doesn't always see things as we do.

*Submitted by Holly Ulbrich*

## LEAD Day

Ten of us from the Oconee Pickens League (**Carol Asalon, Shelia Crawford, Sandra Land, Janet and Ken Marsh, Sarah McNeill, Ruth Reed, Pat Spurlock, Janie Shipley, and Ellie Taylor**) joined about 90 other members from South Carolina Leagues at the annual League Education and Advocacy Day on Saturday, January 28, 2023. We started the day with a presentation from the State Election Commission (SEC) and ended with one from Andy Brach, publisher of the *Statehouse Report* ([www.statehousereport.com](http://www.statehousereport.com)). As Ken Marsh noted, this was a rare meeting where the actual mission of the organization, and not how to run/fund/manage the organization, occupied the entire day. Hurrah!

**John Michael Catalano** of the SEC gave a rundown of recent election efforts; life has been busy, and the support of the League is appreciated. The *2022 Annual Report* is available at [scvotes.gov](http://scvotes.gov), along with lots of other information. Mr. Catalano credited [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) with supplementing [scvotes.gov](http://scvotes.gov) by providing candidate statements. Two points stood out to me:

1. Twenty-four director positions of the 46 election commissions had vacancies since January 2021. Normally there are only a few vacancies. This, along with last-minute changes in the election regulations, led to major scrambling to organize the primary and general elections.
2. There is an effort to coordinate local elections across the state. The goal is to ease the stress on the election commissions and to cut costs and minimize confusion. The League supports this position, and we need to provide more information on the details. I am temporarily handicapped in having limited use of my right hand and can't make enough sense of my notes to fill you in at the moment!

Our three lobbyists, **Lynn Teague, Janelle Rivers, and Teresa Arnold** updated us on legislative activity. Discussion of the judiciary and elections are in the forefront. I highly recommend that we all attend the Legislative Update at 5 pm on Feb 6; this Zoom call is for members only, and members have received an email with the link to register. Also Lynn's blog, [Making Democracy Work SC](#), available on the LWVSC website, has additional details.

Next on the agenda: Strategies for Change: Grassroots Advocacy at the Local and State Levels, **Lynn Teague** and panelists **Leslie Skardon**, LWV of Charleston; **Allison Terracio**, Richland County Council; and **Wendy Brawley**, former State Representative, District 70. This was a motivating discussion of advocacy by those who are doing it. Basically, meet legislators in person, hand-write letters, don't count on email. Be courteous and factual, write letters to the editor—the usual.

The working groups presented small-group discussions. I wandered and heard the education group learning about book bans and school board; the anti-racism discussion with Karen Woods and our own **Sarah McNeill**, the food/climate change discussion with **Ted Volskay** and our own **Ellie Taylor** (duly noted that our own lunches were packaged in Styrofoam and plastic!) The final talk by **Andy Brack** left us with the suggestion for a fifth working group on democracy and the press. **Janet Marsh** and I exchanged glances at this—see her article about our meeting with the publisher of the *Pickens Courier*.

*Submitted by Ruth Reed*

## LEAD Day Attendees



**LEAD Day Attendees from left to right: Ken Marsh, Pat Spurlock, Janet Marsh, Carol Asalon, Janie Shipley, Shelia Crawford, Ruth Reed, Sarah McNeill, Sandra Land, and Ellie Taylor**

### Contribution Form

League of Women Voters of Oconee and Pickens Counties, LWVCA, P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (opt) \_\_\_\_\_

I wish my contribution to remain anonymous.

I wish my contribution to be tax deductible where allowed by law. My check is made out to the "League of Women Voters Ed Fund" which is a 501(c)(3) organization.

I wish to support the League's action priorities. My check is made out to the "League of Women Voters" and is not tax-deductible.

Visit our website at [www.lwvclemsonarea.org](http://www.lwvclemsonarea.org) and contact us at [lwvclemson@gmail.com](mailto:lwvclemson@gmail.com).