

Co-President's Message

A lot gets packed into the shortest month of the year!

Black History Month; American Heart Month; National Presidents Day, February 19. Let's not forget Ground Hog and Valentine Days!



Pat Spurlock

Election 2024 is in full swing. The South Carolina Democratic Party Presidential Primary was held Saturday, Feb. 3, and the Republican Presidential Primary is Saturday, Feb. 24. In this issue of *The Voter*, you will see that the LWVOP Voter Services Team is already organizing voter registration events. The SAFE team led the January Monthly program with Oconee and Pickens County election officials. LWVOP was awarded a state League grant to expand our voter outreach and education efforts.

On a local level, LWVOP members led by the program planning team are reviewing the national program/positions for 2024-2026 and local programs for 2024-2025. The Board will review the consensus recommendations and present the final list to the members in March for comment. The Program for 2024-2025 will be voted on at our annual meeting in May. **Holley Ulbrich** (Pickens) and I (Oconee) represented the League at the County delegation meetings in January. In our remarks, we stressed our positions on three pending legislative topics: opposition to the election of judges; support for local school and library boards to select curriculum and books, not the legislature; and leaving health care decisions such as gender-affirming care to the patient, their family, and medical professionals. Although the legislators welcomed our comments, we realize our positions are contrary to theirs. We will continue to make our opinions known and work for change.

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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

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Holley Ulbrich, Co-President
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Elaine Laiewski, Treasurer

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Linda Gahan
Eleanor Hare
Janie Shipley

Calendar of Events

Feb. 13	LWVOP Board Meeting	5:00 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Fellowship 230 Pendleton Rd., Clemson
Feb. 14	104 th Birthday of LWV	
Feb. 20	“Working Together for Better Health in Oconee and Pickens”	7:00 p.m., Clemson United Methodist Church
Feb. 24	Republican Presidential Primary	Early voting: Feb. 12-Feb. 22; closed Sunday, Feb. 18 and Monday, Feb. 19
March 19	Environment	7:00 p.m., Clemson United Methodist Church
May 14	LWVOP Annual Meeting	Occasions, Central
June 11	Statewide Primaries	

Co-President’s Message Continued

On a lighter note, this year is a Leap Year. We get an extra day this February! Any “Sadie Hawkins” ladies out there? If that name means nothing to you, Google it.

Pat Spurlock

LWVSC Local League Empowerment Grant

Our local League application for our “Empowering Internet-Disadvantaged Voters” project has been accepted! We will receive \$660 to expand our voter education and voter registration efforts. Projects include preparing and distributing voter information in Spanish; identifying opportunities to reach out to residents who have limited access to the internet; and additional LWVOP signage to be used at community events such as Juneteenth, Oktober Feast, and Historic Heritage Month events.

A HUGE Shout-Out to our Co-President Holley Ulrich who wrote the successful grant!

Gearing up for Voter Registration for 2024: Join Us!

**There are opportunities for voter registration in February at the high schools.
Now's the time to join and learn from experienced volunteers.**

The League of Women Voters of Oconee and Pickens counties Voter Registration Team needs your help and your ideas on how to achieve our goals for voter registration. We need all hands-on deck! We've got to get it right this year. Our Democracy is on the line!

Our goals are:

1. To increase voter registration in Oconee and Pickens counties.
2. To focus on registering younger voters, women, and minorities in areas where registration and turnout is low.
3. To expand to areas beyond where we currently hold voter registration activities.
4. To educate voters on issues important to them, thus, building relationships with communities.
5. To build support for the work of the Voter Registration Team.

Opportunities to get involved:

1. Become a volunteer to participate in voter registration activities. Training will be provided. If new, you will be matched with an experienced person.
2. Encourage other league members to volunteer.
3. Suggest and help with events: at festivals, churches, women's groups, civic/community organizations, social clubs, community meetings, new apartment complexes, retirement homes, ethnic grocery stores, libraries, breweries, etc. This will help meet goal #3.
4. Identify a contact person with whom the team can work to organize a voter registration activity.
5. Organize an event with support from experienced team members.
6. Help with creating training documents and handouts.
7. Become a member of the Voter Registration Team.

This is a grassroots effort, and it is going to take all of us, as a League, to meet our goals. Wherever your strength lies, your help in any of the areas mentioned above is appreciated.

Please contact **Carol Asalon** at Carol.Asalon@furman.edu with questions. If you are interested in joining this most important endeavor, **please respond by March 1**. Together we can accomplish anything!

Preview of February Meeting: Working Together for Better Health

Working Together for Better Health in Oconee and Pickens

February 20, 2024, 7:00 to 8:00 PM

Clemson United Methodist Church

300 Frontage Road, Clemson

Explore efforts underway to improve the health of Oconee and Pickens County residents and to identify priorities for public policy change at all levels of government.

- Highlights of the health of Oconee and Pickens County residents focusing on priorities, disparities.
- Examples of programs which address priorities including Healthy County Coalitions.
- Examples of policy changes necessary to support priorities such as Smoke Free Palmetto State.
- Actions taken or planned by LWVOP to promote public policy change at national, state, and local levels.

The speaker will be **Misty Lee**, Community Engagement Manager, Anderson, Oconee, Pickens & Greenville, Upstate Public Health Region, DHEC. Ms. Lee works with communities to assess local needs, develop priorities, and action plans, and she facilitates and coordinates partnerships to address risk factors such as poor nutrition, sedentary lifestyles, and commercial tobacco use. She has been with the agency for more than twenty-nine years.

Local Annexation

Laura Hinty of Easley has brought to our attention some issues of annexation that need to be resolved at the state level. LWVSC does have positions on annexation, but this process also fits into the local and state positions on growth management. While we are not suggesting that we advocate as a League, or that any of you advocate in the name of the League, it would be worth looking at the bills and the issues and deciding if it is of concern to you in your part of Oconee or Pickens County. It arose in an Easley annexation proposal. The specific concern is that at present counties have no say in the matter of municipal annexation—just the landowners and the city government—even though county roads and other services may be impacted. Laura argues that the 100% annexation method has been abused by developers and municipalities and has significant negative impacts on adjacent landowners, especially farmers.

There are currently two bills addressing this issue. Local representatives **Jerry Carter** of House District 3 was one of the sponsors of H4586 and **Thomas Beach** in District 10 is sponsoring H4651. If you would like to learn more about this issue and how it might impact growth and development in your area, please review the bills and discuss them with your legislative representatives. *

If you would like more information from Laura Hinty, contact one of the co-presidents to be connected to her.

Submitted by Holley Ulrich

Education Action Team: CAFE

Education Action Team - Community Advocates for Education (CAFE)

Censorship

Censors are targeting Pickens County Library System in a coordinated mass campaign. Formal challenges were filed against at least eight books with more challenges expected. Censors are targeting books written for the young adult audience with LGBTQ+ themes or characters under the false claim the books are “obscene” and “pornography.” Police presence was needed for the first time at the January 2024 library board meeting to ensure public safety. Speakers from the LWVOP Education Action Team - Community Advocates for Education (CAFE) - spoke at the meeting to welcome the newly appointed board members, defend the freedom to read, and in support of the role of parents/guardians to make decisions for their own family alone.

CAFE invites members of our local League and interested pro-literacy community members to attend the next library board meeting on March 21, 2024, at 6pm to support and/or speak in defense of the freedom to read.

State Board of Education

The State Board of Education (BOE) is considering a rule that states, “Instruction Material is not Age and Developmentally Appropriate” for any age or age group of children if it includes descriptions or visual depictions of “sexual conduct”. The proposed regulation opens a statewide pathway for the restriction/removal of books and educational materials from all public-school classrooms and libraries.

The current state BOE representative for Pickens County is serving under an expired term. The term ended Dec 31, 2023. They will continue to serve until replaced. It is the Pickens County Legislative Delegation's turn to appoint a replacement. We have an opportunity to find a pro-public education nominee. The appointee can live in Greenville or Pickens Counties (13th Judicial Circuit). At a time of coordinated efforts to weaken and censor public education, it is critical to encourage suitable candidates to apply. The next CAFE coalition meeting is February 21, 2024, at 7:30pm via Zoom. We will discuss these issues and more. Contact **Reba Kruse** at reba.kruse@gmail.com if you would like to join our team.

Create Your Own Bill Tracking System

LegiScan is an online site that tracks South Carolina legislation, including bill language, sponsors, committee assignment, and progress through the South Carolina Legislature. Although it covers all legislation introduced in South Carolina, it is manageable because the user chooses which bills and/or topics to follow. Please check this helpful link out at: <https://legiscan.com/SC>.

Submitted by Pat Spurlock

What Are Mis- and Disinformation?

Misinformation: inadvertently sharing false information without the intent to harm

Disinformation: intentionally sharing false information with the intent to harm

While disinformation may seem like the worse of the two, it's frighteningly easy to spread misinformation. Remember the game "telephone" and how it shows that our messages get distorted over time? Every day, we play telephone in our face-to-face conversations, over social media, and more, with important political information. We're all susceptible to mis- and disinformation, but the following steps will help you spot it before you take part in its spread:

1. **Research the source:** Who's sharing this information? If it's online, does the website sound familiar or have any political affiliations? If it's in-person, is this individual a frequent exaggerator, or do they have a job/experience that would give them insider info?
2. **Check the date:** It's easy to get incensed over an article on Twitter...only to realize it was published years ago and no longer applies.
3. **Cross-check:** Are reliable news sources reporting the same information? If not, it's unlikely that your smaller source just happened to get a super-exclusive, juicy scoop.
4. **Read past the headline:** You know how tabloids post scandalous headlines and follow them with articles that are relatively mundane? Unfortunately, political outlets do that too. It's easy to take a snippet out of context to make an article look like it will be more dramatic than it is.
5. **Question emotionally charged content:** Is the person or outlet sharing this information using emotionally manipulative language to get you upset or excited: That's a red flag. Reliable sources let the facts fuel your response, not emotional language. Often, loaded language exists as a substitute for other words or phrases, one more negative or positive than the other depending on the circumstance. A loaded word is chosen because the speaker or writer believes it'll be more persuasive than an alternate neutral word.

Below are examples of loaded language. Use positive, active words in your communications to avoid unintentionally spreading dis- or mis- information:

Atrocious vs. bad, bureaucrat vs. public servant, categorical vs. specific, demonization vs. criticism, dreadful vs. bad, effective vs. good, eliminate vs. remove, elitist vs. expert, exploit vs. take advantage, phenomenon vs. event, propaganda vs. message, slashed vs. reduced, superior vs. better, tremendous vs. very good, triumphant vs. successful, vigilante vs. crime fighter.

Adapted from an article on LWV website; submitted by Pat Spurlock

Next Month: **How to Stop Mis- and Disinformation.**

New Member Bio: Margie Barnes

A native of Westminster, South Carolina, **Margie Barnes** has lived in Seneca most of her adult life. She attended Erskine College where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics.

Additionally, she received her Master of Business Administration from Capella University. She worked at Duke Energy in various departments and locations for over forty-two years until her retirement in April 2023. After retirement from Duke Energy, Margie continues to advocate for the nuclear industry with her involvement in United States Women in Nuclear. On a local level, she is a mentor at the Seneca Middle School.



Additionally, she has applied to participate as a volunteer in the Juvenile Arbitration Program for the Tenth Judicial Circuit. Margie is also a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Margie is married to **Larry Barnes**. They have two young ladies from this union, who both work in the school system. Margie's life can be summed up with the four "F's": Faith, Family, Friends, and Fitness.

Public Hearing for A Proposed Planned Development for Keowee Trail

On Monday, February 5, Clemson City Council held a public hearing on a Proposed Planned Development of 5.5 acres of land along Keowee Trail. Core Spaces from Chicago presented their plan to build a 7-story, 450 student residential unit building (1300 beds), six townhouses, two parking garages with approximately 750 spaces, a plaza, 8500 sq. ft. of retail space, sidewalks and walkways that will overlook Larry Abernathy Park.

Several years ago, Clemson City Council hired a consultant firm from St. Louis to present ideas for the development of this area near the intersection of College Avenue and Tiger Boulevard with a special community focus and input. The Clemson NEXT Strategic Plan that resulted from this consultation includes goals for Uptown. These include establishing a welcoming gateway for downtown Clemson, improving access to Clemson's Lake Hartwell, creating gathering spaces to attract a diversity of users.

In 2021, property owners, Keowee Trail LLC, filed suit against the City and individual Council members alleging that the City is inhibiting its ability to develop the property. The latest Court filing made last December is an agreement that both parties will not move forward with litigation, contingent on a vote on the project in the first quarter of 2024. Residents who attended this public hearing noted this proposal does not address these goals but instead creates more student apartments overlooking prime real estate – the Larry Abernathy Park. Will Clemson City Council stick to the Clemson NEXT Strategic Plan or approve another student apartment complex? If you have comments or questions, Council members' emails may be found at cityofclemson.org.

Submitted by Linda Gahan

Local Government Meeting Information

Clemson City Council
1st and 3rd Monday, 6:30 p.m.
Pickens County Council
1st Monday, 6:30 p.m.
Pickens County School Board
4th Monday, 7:00 p.m.
Pickens County Library Board
Schedule on Pickens County
Website, Boards & Commissions

Seneca City Council
2nd Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.
Oconee County Council
1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.
Oconee County School Board
3rd Monday, 6:00 p.m.
Oconee County Library Board
Schedule on Oconee County
Website, Boards & Commissions

Confirm dates, time, and agenda on their websites.



Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, LWV President, died January 28, 2024. Several LWVOP leaders met Dr. Turner when she brought "Power the South" to Columbia in October. She was an active participant during the two-day conference and an inspiration to all who attended. Dr. Turner's mantra was "keep on keepin' on"--the best way to honor her memory.