



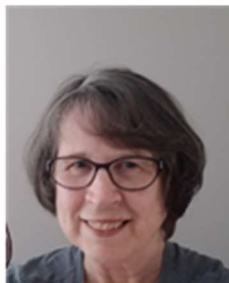
THE VOTER

January 2022, Vol. 49 No. 1

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Oconee and Pickens Counties

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

January 1 is the traditional time to make New Year's resolutions. Be it resolved that I will recommit myself to Making Democracy Work by advocating for fair voting rights and fair district maps and become a better educated citizen. I hope you will join me by renewing your commitment to the LWV. Having to hold meeting via Zoom has been hard on league participation over the last two years.



Ruth Reed

On January 18 the LWVOP's local program will focus on the election commissions in the two counties. The Secure, Accessible and Fair Elections Committee chaired by **Shari Jung** and **Janet Marsh** have invited our election directors to educate us on the working of the election process. Join us through Zoom to become better informed and meet these dedicated officials.

January is the month when our county legislative delegations meet with the public to solicit input from their constituents. The League will participate, thanking our legislators for representing us and asking them to join us in efforts to secure fair voting rights for all citizens.

LEAD (League Education and Advocacy Day) is a statewide virtual meeting on January 22 from 9-12:30. Register on the LWVSC website by January 13 to attend. Learn what's ahead at the Statehouse, how to stay nonpartisan in today's political climate and about civic education in the public schools.

The struggle for fair district maps continues at the local level. LWVOP and the NAACP partnered on January 10 to educate Oconee County citizens on the redistricting process.

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THE VOTER

League of Women Voters Clemson Area
Serving the Citizens of Pickens, Oconee, and Anderson Counties

P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633
www.lwvclemsonarea.org

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan 18 at 7:00 p.m.	Local program presented virtually by panel from election commissions of Pickens and Oconee Counties
Jan 20	LWVSC Health Care Working Group Program
Jan 20 at 6:30 p.m.	Oconee Delegation Meeting at Seneca City Hall
Jan 22	LEAD Statewide Virtual Meeting
Jan 25 at 5:00 p.m.	LWVOP Board Meeting
Feb 5	Program Planning for LWVUS and LWVOP Local Program

**Details on how to participate in above events will be sent by email.*

CO-CHAIR'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

Plan to participate in National Program Planning on February 5. Currently, we review our positions, propose new studies and determine our action priorities for the next two years. This is a grassroots way to recommend programming to the National League Board (LWVUS).

Submitted by Ruth Reed

Freedom to Vote Act

According to the *Washington Post*, one of the bills Senate Democrats want to pass is the *Freedom to Vote Act*, which primarily focuses on ballot access, but is also chock-full of proposals sought by election security advocates. It would:

- Require states to conduct post-election audits
- Set up an advisory committee focused on election audits at the Commerce Department
- Formally add "election infrastructure" to the Department of Homeland Security's list of "critical infrastructure" sectors
- Block states from using voting machines that aren't manufactured or assembled in the United States and require them to have their software "developed and stored in the United States"

CLIMATE CHANGE: A CURRENT AND FUTURE DANGER

Climate change is no longer a future threat. It is here. It is an existential emergency. We need every compassionate person to grasp the magnitude of the impact of climate change on the future of humanity. Personally, I am terrified for my children and grandchildren in the years ahead.

Unprecedented fires, droughts, flooding rains, sea rise, heat waves, dying sea-life, melting ice caps, and the collapse of entire ecosystems are all red flag alerts now. During a recent trip to the Denver International Airport, I could see smoke and red skies in the surrounding mountains. I would learn later that almost 1,000 homes were destroyed in a blaze that moved the length of a football field every minute due to 115 MPH winds. No one yet knows what started the fire, but severe drought conditions and furious winds fueled it.

Human influence has warmed Earth's climate at a rate that is unprecedented in at least the last 2,000 years according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group One 2021 Report for Policy Makers. The report reviews the evidence that directly correlates drastic weather events to increased levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations: carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. These gases are unequivocally related to human activity. They are taken up by land and water causing each of the last four decades to be increasingly warmer.

It is time for bold and decisive action from governments. To reach the international goal of no more than 1.5 C warming we all need to act now, but is there the political will to do it? What can you and I do to help?

Here are a few ideas:

- Remain aware of the significance and complexity of climate change.
- Advocate for legislation that addresses both prevention and adaptation.
(That includes reducing the use of fossil fuels and not allowing new investments or subsidies for this industry).
- Strengthen our own awareness of the connection between small choices and Earth consciousness.
- Encourage and engage in personal lifestyle changes that help even in seemingly small ways.
- Work together to heal environmental injustices.
- Engage in community action on local environmental issues when they are identified.

As members of our LWVOP community we need to continually educate ourselves and our wider community about how to live gently and sustainability in all we do. In that spirit **Ted Volsky** (Greenville) and I are co-leading our LWVSC State Environmental Working Group. If you are interested, we would also like to organize our own LWVOP Environmental Working Group. Please let me know if you are interested at elptyl@bellsouth.net.

Submitted by Ellie Taylor

COMMENTS PRESENTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION MEETING ON JANUARY 10, 2022

As most of you know, The LWV is a nonpartisan organization that has worked since 1920 to improve our government and engage all Americans in decisions that impact our lives. We are working to “make democracy work.”

First, on behalf of the LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, let me thank you all for your PUBLIC SERVICE. The time and energy that you devote to serving the citizens of Pickens County does not go unnoticed. Also, congratulations to **Senator Alexander** on being elected to the office of Senate President.

Our local chapter has undergone a name change from LWV Clemson Area to LWV of Oconee and Pickens Counties. LWVCA has served us well for over 50 years, but LWVOP better describes the communities we serve and where our members live. We have also recommitted ourselves to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

You will find our members serving as poll workers, conducting voter registration drives, hosting candidate forums, as well as attending Election Commission Board meetings, County Council meetings, and other community functions. On the state level our unpaid lobbyist **Lynn Teague**, is well known to our delegation. Her testimony communicates our positions and is a critical part of our advocacy efforts.

Our current major focus is on voting/elections and redistricting. We encourage redistricting that will best provide representation of all communities of interest, without consideration for incumbency.

We are also tracking State House Bill 3444 that would reorganize our State Election Commission. While it would more evenly distribute Commission appointments by political party, this bill would also give the Senate an outsized role in our government by calling for the advice and consent of the Senate.* I am providing a printed copy of part of our state positions on election management.

However, everything our local chapter does is for our local citizens. In Pickens County we want every vote to matter and every vote to count.

We support you in your efforts for the same goals!

*[I just read through the bill: There is hereby created the State Election Commission composed of five members, to be appointed by the Governor, upon the advice and consent of the Senate, at least one of whom shall be a member of the majority political party represented in the General Assembly, and at least one of whom shall be a member of the largest minority political party represented in the General Assembly, to be appointed by the Governor to serve terms of four years and until their successors have been elected and qualify, except of those first appointed three shall serve for terms of two years.]

Submitted by Caroline Bishop-McLeod

WHAT IS PROGRAM PLANNING, AND SHOULD I BE INVOLVED?

On February 5 we plan to examine our current national league positions for retention, revision, or removal; consider updating the healthcare position to concur with the New York State position; suggest any new studies along with funding and leadership recommendations; and order our national action priorities. Each local league does this planning, and the results are submitted to the LWVUS board for their consideration by March 1. This is how the grassroots affect the national program planning agenda. We will also look at our local program in the same way.

In League parlance “program” refers to issues of political significance, such as redistricting, election security, health care -- any issue on which the League has a position or is developing a position. It does not mean the presentations at meetings that we have every month, although those are developed with the local, state, and national “program” positions in mind. For example, our program/presentation for the January meeting is a panel of our election officials and board members for Oconee and Pickens Counties. This presentation falls under the “program” of election management (<https://my.lwv.org/south-carolina-state/electoral-democracy-issues/election-management>).

Local Leagues meet yearly in January or February to decide on “programs” for the upcoming year. This is a critical meeting for the entire membership, either just to listen and learn or to propose areas on which to focus during the coming year. For example, redistricting has been the area of much activity for the past few years because of the 2020 census. We currently have a group that is actively engaged in the issue of financial responsibility in healthcare management in South Carolina, and a League in New York is pushing to update the healthcare national position through concurrence. Nonpartisanship and responsible management of elections is clearly a matter of concern and one that is in the sights of another group in our League (the SAFE group, Safe and Fair Elections). We have members interested in education and environmental issues. And there are many other issues of “making democracy work.” How do we focus our efforts to have the maximum effect? The program planning meeting is where we start—and continue--this process.

LWVOP Welcomes New and Improved Communications Initiative

Have you ever heard the adage, “If it’s not reported, it didn’t happen?” Frequently, non-profit organizations engaged in “good works” are so involved in the effort, they forget to communicate. LWVOP is gearing up with a recently developed communications plan and an enthusiastic team to do a better job of reporting to membership, the public and public officials.

The team includes **Pat Spurlock, Cherie Walker, Eleanor Hare, Ruth Reed** and **Janet Marsh**. They will serve as the “funnel” through which LWVOP news is gathered and disseminated. The next edition of the VOTER will report how the team will operate to have a bigger footprint in our community. If you have an interest in working with the team, please contact **Janet Marsh**, jmarsh@clemson.edu.

STATEWIDE MEETINGS: LEAD AND HEALTH CARE WORKING GROUP

League Education and Advocacy Day (LEAD) is an annual event held every January, normally in person, but again this year for hopefully the last time, via Zoom. It is Saturday, January 22nd from 9 to 12:30 via Zoom. When it is in person, you get to meet LWV members from the other thirteen Leagues which is always fun, but Zoom is better than not going at all and the plus is, you don't have to drive to Columbia and back. You might want to gather a few other League members and have a watch party so it won't just be you and the computer screen!

What's to watch? **Lynn Teague** on the legislative session and bills to watch, **JoAnne Day** on practicing non-partisanship in a hyper partisan world, and the centerpiece, a three-member panel on civics education in our public schools organized by the education working group. It should be very informative.

You must register for the event by January 13th, and you will then get a Zoom link. Register on the LWVSC website, or if you haven't cleaned out your inbox, there is a MailChimp newsletter from LWVSC with a link.

As a bonus, there is a Thursday night program (January 20th, two days before LEAD) put on by the Health Care working group (**Janie Shipley** and **Sandra Land** are members) on access to health care in South Carolina. It promises to be very informative. That event also requires registration (available at the LWVSC website or in the Mailchimp you received) and is another good opportunity to invite a few fellow Leaguers to join you for a watch party.

REDISTRICTING IN OCONEE COUNTY

The population of Oconee County increased 5.8% between 2010 and 2020. How will those 4,334 new residents of Oconee County be accommodated when a new map is drawn to redistrict County Council seats? The League of Women Voters of Oconee and Pickens Counties has joined with the Oconee Branch of the NAACP to examine this question and to provide input to the County Council.

On January 10, these organizations cosponsored a virtual community forum to educate the public about the redistricting process. **County Attorney David Root** discussed the districts that are most impacted by the population change, the steps already taken by the County Council to address redistricting and ways in which the public will have opportunity to offer input. Dr. John Ruoff presented maps he has developed, discussed the concerns about splitting precincts, and encouraged the public to take advantage of the opportunity to provide input to the County Council.

County Council members and School Board members will be elected by voters in the newly formed Districts beginning in 2022. It is important for the public to be aware and involved in the redistricting process at all levels, to ensure that their vote is meaningful and has maximum impact.

ACTION ALERT: TAKE ACTION ON FEDERAL VOTING RIGHTS LEGISLATION

Call or Send a Letter by Jan 14 or ASAP

Senator Lindsey Graham

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510 202.224.5972 (DC) 864.646.4090 (Pendleton)

<https://www.lgraham.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=contact-form>

Senator Tim Scott

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510 202.224.6121 (DC) 864.233.5366 (Greenville)

<https://www.scott.senate.gov/contact/email-me>

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Phone calls and letters are most effective in influencing politicians! However, you may use their contact form on their web page, website given under their phone number. You are contacting them to ask that voting rights be brought to the Senate floor for discussion. Why is this important? Here are ideas for what you might say (and add your own!):

- Introduce yourself as a constituent. Thank them for their service.
- You believe the right to vote is the CORNERSTONE of our democracy and you strongly support voting rights legislation, the Freedom to Vote Act or the John Lewis Voting Rights Act.
- Multiple audits show minimal-to-no voter fraud. Audits also show that measures to encourage voting do not necessarily benefit one party over another.
- Efforts in states to change voting outcomes should not be tolerated. Since state legislatures can pass legislation with a simple majority vote, the Senate should be able to do the same.
- We urgently need national standards to protect our freedom to vote, ensure fair representation, and get big money out of politics.
- U.S. standing in the world and among citizens depends on our election remaining non-partisan!

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

If you send a letter to South Carolina senators, send a copy to President Biden and Senator Schumer, along with a brief explanation. Indicate on your letter to the South Carolina senators that you are copying the President and Senator Schumer.

If you call your senator, call President Biden and Senator Schumer. Tell them you are counting on them to use tools at their disposal to pass voting rights legislation NOW – protection of the vote cannot wait!

President Joe Biden

The White House

Washington, DC 20500

Phone: 202.456.1111 (calls taken Tuesday – Thursday, 11 AM – 3 PM)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

Clemson City Council *1st and 3rd Monday, 6:30 pm*
Seneca City Council *2nd Tuesday, 6:00 pm*
Pickens County Council *1st Monday, 6:30 pm*
Oconee County Council *1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm*
Anderson County Council *2nd and 4th Tuesday, 6:00 pm*

Pickens County School Board *4th Monday, 7:00 pm*
Oconee County School Board *3rd Monday, 6:00 pm*
Anderson Co. School Board *3rd Monday, 6:00 pm*

Contribution Form

League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area 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 and contact us at lwvclemson@gmail.com.

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