

Co-President's Message

The banner election year of 2024 is finally here, and we are gearing up for a busy year of elections, candidate forums, and voter registration, starting with the presidential primaries in February.

Cheryl Lee is stepping down from leadership to mentoring in voter registration, helping **Sandra Land** and **Carol Asalon** to take on this important League function.



Holley Ulbrich

Sarah McNeill is still running candidate events, and **Alice Flower** is still managing VOTE411. All of them would appreciate volunteers! The Election Commissions in both counties would also appreciate more poll workers.

In addition to our January in person meeting, we will have a Zoom, members only national and local program planning discussion. LWVUS has a survey for us to fill out to set priorities for the next two years. Local program planning is intended to review, revise, and/or expand our existing local positions on which we can advocate. Watch emails for details.

The April, members-only, event is participating in a state study, the first one in about eight years. A state study is part of a consensus process to develop a position on which we can lobby legislators or take other actions. (You can find a complete listing of our existing positions on the LWVSC website in the publication, *Agenda for Action*.) This study focuses on the question of which executive officials should be elected and which should be appointed. The study is a response to three events in the last few years: changing the Adjutant General from elected to appointed, a defeated referendum to make the Superintendent of Education appointed rather than elected, and the recent have been introduced to change the Commissioner of Agriculture from elected to appointed. Other elected executive officers are the Treasurer, Secretary of State, and the Attorney General.

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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

Pat Spurlock, Co-President
 Holley Ulbrich, Co-President
 Sandra Land, VP Programming
 Allison Ranson, Secretary
 Elaine Laiewski, Treasurer

ELECTED DIRECTORS

Carol Asalon
 Kathy Bargeron
 Carolyn Bishop-McLeod
 Janet Marsh
 Sarah McNeill
 Ruth Reed
 Elizabeth Vogt
 Cherie Walker

APPOINTED DIRECTORS

Sheila Crawford
 Linda Gahan
 Eleanor Hare
 Cheryl Lee
 Janie Shipley

Calendar of Events

January 8	LWVSC Legislative Update 5:00 p.m., Zoom
January 9	LWVOP Board Meeting 5:00 p.m., Unitarian Universalist Fellowship 230 Pendleton Rd., Clemson
January 16	Oconee & Pickens County Voter Registration and Election Boards 7:00 p.m., Clemson United Methodist Church Frontage Rd., Clemson
January 23	Voter Registration Deadline for the Republican Primary
February 3	Democratic Presidential Primary
February 24	Republican Presidential Primary

Co-President's Message Continued

I have been serving on the study committee preparing the background information and consensus questions. More details to come. May the new year be one in which the League continues to carry its vitally important agenda of Making Democracy Work.

Holley Ulbrich
Co-President

Environmental Tip of the Month Try a Plant-Based Diet in 2024 for Your Health and the Health of Planet Earth

Adopting a plant-based diet is helpful to our health and the health of planet Earth. Vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole grains are known to have benefits including increased vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Using meat as a condiment rather than a main dish can help cut down on calories but is also helpful to reduce carbon and methane emissions. Be especially aware of beef since cattle naturally emit the gas methane during their digestion processes. Methane is a gas 60 times more powerful than CO₂ in blocking heat on Earth. Good sources of recipes featuring vegetables are vegetarian cookbooks like *Simple Vegetarian Pleasures* by **Jeanne Lemon** and vegetarian websites. LWVOP held a vegetarian meal group last spring, and we hope to do so again in 2024.

Submitted by Ellie Taylor, Environmental Team Leader

Recap of the November Meeting: A Dialogue with SC Legislators

On Tuesday, November 21, 2023, the League of Women Voters of Oconee and Pickens Counties held a dialogue with local South Carolina State Legislators. **Senator Thomas Alexander**, District 1; **Representative Jerry Carter**, District 3; and **Representative Neal Collins**, District 5, gave opening remarks followed by a Q&A discussion. **LWVOP Co-President Holley Ulbrich** moderated the panel. Some of the highlights of the last year and priorities for 2024 are as follow:

Rep. Collins (Easley), elected in 2014, pointed to accomplishments in education with salary increases and paid family leave for teachers. As a member of Ways and Means he expects continuing investment in education and policy change to strengthen public education. Sen. Alexander, as President of the Senate noted the \$1.4 billion in Federal funds designated for infrastructure, water and sewer, and broadband expansion during the first session. Next year workforce development will be a priority while addressing needs for childcare. Also, to consider how to increase school lunch support and other ways to deal with hunger in South Carolina. Rep. Carter (Clemson), elected in 2020, emphasized his growing level of comfort with the role and the ongoing challenge of the wide range of issues. He pointed to the increase in reserves, dealing with fentanyl abuse, and bond reform as accomplishments. In 2024 he wants to work on making sure public schools are focusing on teachers and students. Conservation, in particular securing access to water, will be a priority.

During the Q&A session a number of other topics were covered

- **Judicial reform** will be a priority for LWVSC in 2024. There was agreement that change is needed considering it is not a perfect system and lacks public trust. There are no concrete proposals on what should be done. There is no support among the local delegation for electing judges. During the 2024 session the focus will likely be on the process including setting qualifications and the makeup of the “nominating” committee.
- **Hate crimes.** Another Hate Crimes Bill passed the House with a comfortable margin but stalled in the Senate. The Senate expected to have a more deliberative process. Some Senators oppose it; say that the sentence for the crime is sufficient without adding additional punishment because of a hate crimes determination. They expect the Legislature will try again and will eventually pass it.
- **Poor birth outcomes and Medicaid expansion.** Rep. Collins doesn’t know much about maternal and infant mortality, so many issues and only so much time. Sen. Alexander pointed to a reduction in the number of C/Sections and that the Nurse Family Partnership had not yielded the expected results. Need to support programs that work. Agreed that Medicaid expansion is not politically viable for now but willingness to learn more, particularly related to costs/affordability.
- **Education and censorship.** Rep. Carter argued that decisions need to be made at the local level. Rep. Collins suggested that “South Carolinians are pawns in a national movement” and that we should avoid overreacting. The public should know the teachers and have a relationship with the local school board. Alexander agreed that involvement of the community is important.
- **Environment/climate crisis.** There is more concern for meeting future demand in power generation. Transition to electric cars will require grid improvements. The dilemma for the State Legislature is need to deal with current issues rather than something that might happen sometime in the future.

Submitted by Sandra Land

Preview of January Meeting: Meet Your Elections' Officials

January 16 General Meeting

The 2024 Elections are predicted to have record turnouts.
Come meet your Election Commission Directors and
Board Chairs for Oconee and Pickens Counties.
Learn how they work to ensure that our elections are
accurate, secure, accessible, and credible.

Tuesday, January 16, 2024
7:00 pm

This meeting is open and free to the public.

Clemson United Methodist Church
300 Frontage Road
Clemson, SC

Panel members:

Kristie L. Burr, Director; Oconee County Voter Registration & Elections
Jim Murray, Election Board Chairperson

Dr. Amy Sams, Director; Pickens County Voter Registration and Elections
James Little, Election Board Chairperson

All the election information you need is available now!
Go to Vote411.org

Happy Birthday to Us!

January 30th will be the 55th birthday of the LWVOP, originally the Clemson Area League. Forty-three people signed the membership book and paid their \$6 dues.
Eleanor Hare and Holley Ulbrich are charter members.

Happy birthday to our strong and vital organization!

Poll Managers Needed for the 2024 Elections

Oconee and Pickens Counties are recruiting new poll managers for the 2024 elections. If you, or anyone you know, would like to sign up, please have them complete the poll manager application using the link below:

Oconee County Application:

<https://oconeesc.com/voter-registration-and-elections-home/poll-managers/poll-managers-application>

Pickens County Application:

<https://pickenselections.org/poll-worker-applications/>



**The voter registration deadline for the
Democratic Presidential Primary is
Thursday, January 4.**

**The voter registration deadline for the
Republican Presidential Primary is
Thursday, January 23.**

Cover SC Updates and News

Coalition Update!

During the fall, we decided to delay the official launch of Cover SC to pursue an opportunity that would help further our goals of closing the coverage gap in the state. To be able to pursue this strategy, however, meant that we needed to push our public activities into 2024. We promise that we have very exciting news ahead for the Coalition, including events and speaking engagements beginning in January. Look forward to more information in early January. We hope to see you soon!

Legislative News

Some exciting news came recently as **Senator Tom Davis's** pre-filed a resolution for a Health Care Market Reform Study Committee. The resolution calls for a comprehensive assessment of opportunities to improve South Carolinians' access to healthcare including insurance coverage reforms, changes in scope of provider practice and reimbursement, and health system financing mechanisms, among many other issues. The resolution also calls for a large and diverse advisory committee from all across the state to take part in the discussion about the future of healthcare in South Carolina. CoverSC supports passage of this resolution. The full charge to the joint committee and the long list of advisory committee members proposed, can be found at: <https://coversc.us21.list-manage.com/track/click?u=65b1e53ca585c767b023bb13a&id=23346ab420&e=329b090d2c>

Submitted by Janet Marsh



Do we live in a true democracy?

Five of our 46 Presidents have been elected to office while losing the national popular vote, including two of our three past Presidents. Who, or what is to blame? Let's take a closer look at the Electoral College.

During the League's 2022 Convention LWVUS board president Dr. Turner announced the League's next "moonshot" goal: the abolition of the Electoral College. If you are interested in learning more about this work and helping educate League members across South Carolina on this important priority please reach out to National Issues Director Leslie Skardon (leslie.skardon@gmail.com) to learn more.

Work to be Done with Our Legislative Delegation

During the discussion with our local state reps, there was no mention of several issues important to LWVOP and which occupied a great deal of the 2023 Legislative Session. For example: Fetal Heartbeat Act/6-week abortion ban; scholarships for private schools; health care for trans children; school curriculum/censorship/CRT/teaching history. Either they were aware of League positions on the issues, or they were not proud of their votes.

What Can You Do?

As individuals, get to know your legislators and their contact information. Visit or call your Legislators before the session begins in 2024. Pick at least one topic mentioned during the program to follow including bills introduced on the issue. Watch for Action Alerts from LWVSC and call or write your legislators using information in the Action Alerts. (Refer to Directory of Public Officials). Comment on your issue(s) during the County Legislative Delegation meeting next year. **Representative Collins** asked if there was anyone in the audience from his District; no one raised their hand. Therefore, we encourage LWVOP members who reside in District 5 to visit with him soon. -LWVOP: Be ready with a LWVOP statement at the County Legislative Delegation meetings. Submit LTEs on “relevant” topics in front of Legislature during session. LWVOP needs to recruit more members from the Easley area.



Much fun was had at the annual Holiday Party. From left to right: Reggie Turetsky and family, Elaine Laiewski, and Dan and Patty Warner.

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.