

President's Message

The League of Women Voters can only be effective in educating its members and the public and in advocating for our positions if we all participate in some way. Our Program Planning meeting in January identified three priorities: health care, environment/climate change, and education. **Sandra Land** heads up a committee on health care and reproductive rights.



Linda Gahan

This year the group is focusing on Medicaid Expansion and educating the public and legislators on the benefits of the program. **Ellie Taylor** is organizing the first meeting of the LWVOP Environmental group via Zoom on March 15 at 6 pm. If you would like to attend, please send your email to Ellie Taylor at elptyl@bellsouth.net. Please title the email: "LWVOP Environmental Working Group."

I am working on getting an education team to address such issues as book banning, vouchers, history curriculum, teacher pay and teacher shortage. If one of these priorities interest you, please let me know by emailing me at: glinda1942@gmail.com. The State Convention will be held in Columbia on April 29-30. In addition to the business at hand: adopting a program and budget and electing state officers, there are some interesting programs, such as:

- Can Our Democracy Survive the Supreme Court? **Armand Derfner**, co-author, *Justice Deferred: Race and the Supreme Court*
- "Bourbon in the Back Room" live podcast: former state Sens. **Vincent Sheheen and Joel Lourie** will interview **Rita Allison**, former state representative and new State Board of Education appointee.

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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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Calendar of Events

March 13	Oconee Co. School Board Meeting, Oconee Co. District Office, Walhalla, 6 p.m.
March 15	Registration deadline for LWVSC Convention to be held in Columbia, April 29-30.
March 20	Oconee Co. School Board Meeting, Oconee Co. District Office, Walhalla, 6 p.m.
March 21	LWVOP Program on "Affordable and Workforce Housing: What Does It Look Like for Our Communities?", OLLI, 7 p.m. Zoom also available to those who cannot travel.
March 27	Pickens County School Board, 1348 Griffin Mill Road, Easley, 6 p.m.
March 28	LWVOP Board Meeting, Zoom, 7 p.m.
<i>OLLI Building</i>	<i>578 Issaqueena Trail, 100 Thomas Green Clemson Boulevard, Clemson (864-633-5242)</i>

President’s Message Continued

- **Sania Irwin**, vice president, League of Women Voters of the United States
- Cover SC - Expanding Medicaid: **Sue Berkowitz**, executive director, South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center

The LWVOP March 21 program addresses “Affordable and Workforce Housing.” We have all heard of the need for affordable housing. What is the situation in our community?

Linda Gahan

Action Alert!

The House is sending H.3014, the *Clementa C. Pinckney Hate Crimes Bill*, to the Senate. There is no scheduled Senate hearing yet, but it is appropriate to reach out to ALL senators on this now. It is time for the Senate to pass this bill. The ask: ASAP, let's blanket the Senate with constituent comments on this bill. Call (a friendly office assistant will answer) and send a note —both!

Ask your personal Senator to support H.3014.
Mailing address: P.O. Box 142, Columbia, SC 29202

March Program – Affordable and Workforce Housing

March 21, 7 pm, OLLI at Patrick Square

"Affordable and Workforce Housing: What does it look like for our communities?" -- We have at least two panelists, **Eunice Lehmacher**, who is definitely the local champion on the topic and is working with affordable housing developers for property in Central. Eunice will talk about working with companies that do this because there's really no other way these days.

John Fulmer, of Clemson City Council, is a major volunteer with the Shaw Center and works with families who want to stay in their homes, but the homes need repair. John, a retired banker, is also an advocate for workforce and affordable housing. These two panelists can provide a lot of information on what it takes to develop and keep housing affordable for at least some of our population.

Submitted by Catherine Watt

Pickens Board of Elections February Takeaway

LWVOP attendance at Pickens and Oconee Election Board meetings underscore our active support for the important mission of these agencies. Here are just a few highlights from the February 7th Pickens Election Board meeting.

- Director, **Dr. Amy Sams** reviewed pre-filed bills H3471, H3172, H3161, H3472, H3685, H3695, and S403. These bills, if passed, will impact the Voter Registration and Election Office in various ways. For example, H 3161 proposes to change partisan primaries to registered party voters.
- Dr. Sams discussed the County Council Budget request for increased funding for staffing.
- Dr. Sams reported that the SEC had accepted feedback from voters regarding confusing directions on feeding ballots into the scanner. The graphic on the scanner shows the ballot scanned in face up, but the directions given by the poll workers was to scan face down for privacy. These conflicting instructs were identified by a LWVOP post-election survey given to Dr. Sams and the Board. The policy going forward will not include instructions to turn ballot upside down when scanning.
- Board member, **Luke Campbell**, discussed strategies to help voters become more informed before casting their vote. He suggested reaching out to various community resources, including the LWV, to help with voter education.

Voters in Pickens County are fortunate to have an engaged and committed Board and staff. They are working hard to make our democracy work!

Submitted by Caroline Bishop McLeod

Recap of February Meeting: Medicaid Expansion

Close to 40 folks turned out to learn how CoverSC, (a recently formed state coalition supported by LWVSC), will work to expand Medicaid to some of the state's poorest citizens. Nine of the participants joined through Zoom.

Teresa Arnold¹, Chair of CoverSC, described the coalition, its members and the strategies and timetable by which the coalition will work. She said that local groups such as LWVOP and its partners are in the best position to undertake what needs to be done now **educate the public about why expanding Medicaid to the uninsured is important for humanitarian as well as economic interests of the state and the uninsured.**

In Pickens County, 16% of residents have no medical insurance. In Oconee, 22% have no medical insurance. They pay out-of-pocket for their expenses whether its doctor visits, prescriptions, tests, hospitalizations, eye-glasses, or dental work. Twenty-three percent of South Carolinians carry medical debt, the second highest state in the country. Much of this debt could be reduced if the South Carolina Legislature passed a bill for expansion of the Medicaid program as have 40 other states. Agreeing to expansion means the federal government would pay 90% of the cost.

Dr. Peter Sparks, co-founder of the Clemson Free Clinic in 2004, applauded efforts of the community to provide primary health care services to the uninsured but stated that no one should have to reply on "charity" for health care services that can determine life or death.

The outcome of the meeting is the possibility of forming a local network of organizations to support the work of CoverSC. It will hold its first meeting March 14 by zoom, 12:30 – 1:30. The Anderson League of Women Voters will join the group. If interested, contact **Janet Marsh**, jmarsh@clemson.edu.

See the CoverSC website, coversc.org for a list of coalition members, stories, and data about the benefits of expansion to approximately 200,000 South Carolinians.

Ms. Arnold, MSW, was director of SC AARP until she retired in 2021. She has more than 27 years of experience at the SC General Assembly. She was awarded the Order of the Palmetto in 2022. Teresa is on the LWVSC Board and serves as Health Care Policy Specialist. Dr. Peter Sparks retired from Clemson as Professor Emeritus in Civil Engineering. He has served on the Board of Foothills Community Health Care since 2018.

The successful meeting was possible through the technical efforts of **Ruth Reed**, **Pat Spurlock**, and **Ken Marsh** (including Zoom); greeters **Ellie Taylor**, **Ann Fuhr** and **Janie Shipley**; and **Sandy Land**, speaker and chair of the LWVOP Health Policy Team. Thanks to our president, **Linda Gahan** for her gracious welcome and **Janet Marsh** for her planning. It received newspaper coverage by the *Pickens County Courier*, 2.15.23 and *The Journal*, 2.28.23.

LWVSC Biennial Convention

Theme: Democracy: Our Mission, Our Passion

April 29-30, 2023

Double Tree by Hilton Hotel, 2100 Bush River Road, Columbia, SC

Registration Deadline: March 15, \$185

Convention highlights:

South Carolina Leagues gather to adopt a state Program and Action Agenda for 2023-2025 and a 2023-2025 budget, elect a slate of officers/directors, and act on any governance proposals like bylaws changes. LWVSC Convention always includes great speakers and break-out sessions.

Special guests and presentations will include:

- Can Our Democracy Survive the Supreme Court? **Armand Derfner**, co-author, *Justice Deferred: Race and the Supreme Court*
- “Bourbon in the Back Room” live podcast: former state Sens. **Vincent Sheheen and Joel Lourie** will interview **Rita Allison**, former state representative and new State Board of Education appointee.
- **Sania Irwin**, vice president, League of Women Voters of the United States
- Cover SC - Expanding Medicaid: **Sue Berkowitz**, executive director, South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center

LWVOP is allowed nine delegates. Other members are invited to attend as observers.

New LWVOP Environmental Policy Working Group

Our LWVOP is creating a new committee: LWVOP Environmental Policy Working Group. If you wish to know more, please attend our first gathering via Zoom on Wednesday, March 15 at 6 p.m. We will brainstorm our purpose, meeting times, group leadership and review what environmental action is currently happening through the LWVSC. We will also be discussing our LWVSC Environmental Working Group newly approved *Guidance for Planning and Conducting Environmentally Conscious In-Person Meetings* that is being distributed to leagues statewide.

If you would like to attend, please send your email to **Ellie Taylor** at elptyl@bellsouth.net. Please title the email: "LWVOP Environmental Working Group." A Zoom link will be provided.

Submitted by Ellie Taylor

Staffing Our County Elections Offices - A Project of Interest

Local elections officials have told our members that their county offices are understaffed. We have been told that Oconee County has two full-time people, and that Pickens County has two full-time people and one part-time person.

Two suggestions were expressed at our Program Planning meeting. These suggestions are not mutually exclusive.

Suggestion 1: Conduct a fact-finding project to document the level of staffing in other counties.

Suggestion 2: Request the State Elections Commission to recommend staffing levels. Some members expressed the opinion that only elections officials have complete knowledge of the staffing needed to maintain and prepare equipment for elections.

The level of staffing is a continuing problem. How can the LWVSC weigh in appropriately?

LWVOP Website and Facebook Page

Check out the LWVOP website at 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. The LWVOP calendar is continually updated to include information for the following meetings in both Oconee and Pickens counties – Board of Voter Registration and Election Board, School Board meetings, County Council meetings, and the LWVSC Advocacy Team Update meeting. You will find the links to both the LWVOP and State calendar on the LWVOP homepage. Also, you may be interested in what other South Carolina state leagues are doing. Events for other leagues can be found under the tab, "Events."

Submitted by Carol Asalon

Initiation of Education Working Team

LWVOP adopted education as a program priority for the next two years. We need to form a team to follow the issues rapidly exploding in the South Carolina legislature such as vouchers to fund private schools with public funds, book banning, teacher salaries, teacher shortage, and censorship of speech around historical and contemporary racism and oppression. Join **Reba Kruse, Bill Ranson, Eleanor Hare, Rachel Rowe and Rachel and Randy Cox** who have expressed an interest in this issue. If you are interested, contact **Linda Gahan** at glinda1942@gmail.com.

New Members' Bio



Rachel and Randy Cox live in Clemson. They have a son who is a senior in high school and a daughter who is a sophomore in college. Rachel is from Pennsylvania originally, and Randy is from Spartanburg. Rachel teaches multilingual learners at a local middle school and high school, and Randy is a math teacher who used to work for J.P. Stevens/WestPoint Home. Both are concerned about book bans at the local level and “education” bills at the state level that promote censorship and will have a negative impact on education. They are also concerned about recent and future actions by state legislators.

They appreciate all that the League has done to promote voter registration, voter education, and voter access and look forward to meeting other members in the coming months. Rachel and Randy enjoy spending time outdoors and playing board games.

Hearing of H3728, “SC Transparency and Integrity in Education ACT”

On March 1st the South Carolina Senate scheduled a subcommittee hearing for H. 3728, radical legislation designed to censor educator speech around historical and contemporary racism and oppression. The hearing will be on **March 15th, at 9:00** in the Gressette Building, Room 105 at the State Capitol.

If possible, please consider:

- providing in person testimony on March 15th. This is most impactful if feasible!
- meeting with your senator in district.
- drafting written testimony.

Helpful links:

- Bill text: <https://legiscan.com/SC/text/H3728/2023>
- Coalition fact sheet (soon to be updated): <https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-01-27-H3728-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf>; The bill has since been amended to:
 - prevent timely instruction of current events AND
 - allow any parent anywhere in the state to file a lawsuit against any district in the state without going through the complaint process.

Please reach out with any questions or invitations to discuss the bill. We beat this last year and we can do it again, but it takes all of us! **Joshua Malkin**, ACLU of South Carolina, E: jmalkin@aclusc.org. **Call Shelia Crawford at 864-843-9702 if you need a ride.**

*Clemson City Council
1st and 3rd Monday, 6:30 p.m.*

*Pickens County School Board
4th Monday, 7:00 p.m.*

*Seneca City Council
2nd Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.*

*Oconee County School Board
3rd Monday, 6:00 p.m.*

*Pickens County Council
1st Monday, 6:30 p.m.*

Contribution Form

League of Women Voters of Oconee and Pickens Counties LWVOP, 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.lwvop.org and contact us at lwvop1@gmail.com.