

Co-President's Message

Our League year is fast approaching its end, and a busy and active year it has been. Last fall involved a lot of voter service, and that was in an odd-numbered year. Just think about what 2024 is going to be like. We received a grant to provide printed materials about the how and where of voting aimed at senior citizens, and the African American



Holley Ulbrich

and the Hispanic communities (in Spanish). Our Safe and Fair Elections Team is gearing up to join forces with our voter service team—**Sarah McNeill** for candidate forums, **Carol Asalon** and **Sandra Land** for voter registration, and **Eleanor Hare** for VOTE 411 to make this very intense year our most effective ever. They will also be managing the grant which will go for tabling materials at events and lots of printing.

We need all hands on deck with statewide primaries on June 11. Jeff Duncan's Congressional seat is up for grabs, and national and state elections in November along with school boards, county councils, and Clemson City Council. I will be working 14-hour days at the polls four times this year (that includes two presidential primaries.) It pays about minimum wage, but the training and experience will make you feel more comfortable about the safety of our South Carolina elections and the professionalism of our country boards.

We will be participating in a statewide study on whether the seven executive officials named in the South Carolina Constitution should be elected or appointed (currently six of the seven are elected). There has been controversy over two, the Superintendent of Education and the Comptroller General. I have been a part of the team preparing the background materials and consensus questions. More details in the April *Voter*. Remember, Making Democracy Work is our primary mission. Be part of it!

Holley Ulbrich, Co-President

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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
Janie Shipley

Calendar of Events

March 12 5:00 p.m.	LWVOP Board Meeting Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 230 Pendleton Road, Clemson
March 19 7:00 p.m.	LWVOP General Meeting, "Our Southern Forests" Clemson United Methodist Church, 300 Frontage Road
April 16 7:00 p.m.	LWVOP General Meeting Constitutional Officers Study Clemson United Methodist Church, 300 Frontage Road
May 14 6:00 p.m.	LWVOP Annual Meeting at Occasions 1551 18 Mile Road, Central
May 28-June 7	Early Voting, Statewide Primaries 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday
June 11	Statewide Primaries Polls Open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

LWVOP Annual Meeting

The annual LWVOP meeting will be held at Occasions, 1551 18 Mile Road, in Central, Tuesday, May 14th at 6 p.m.

This annual event includes a dinner, a brief business meeting, and a speaker from Furman University, **Glen Halva-Neubauer**. Professor Halva-Neubauer will speak on Home Rule which refers to all the things that our local governments would like to be able to do but can't because the General Assembly won't let them.

We will elect new officers and board members, adopt a budget, vote on approving a revised local program, and present a couple of awards. Cost is \$30. You can let our new Treasurer **Wanda Shehan** (LWVOP1@gmail.com) know if you plan to attend. Guests are welcome. More details in the April *Voter*.

We had a specially called meeting of the League on February 6th to provide input into national League planning and review and revise our local program priorities. The Board believes that this expanded and revised version of our current positions will provide a more definitive basis on three areas of local government that are particularly high priorities—education, growth management, and representative government. The recommended local program is attached with strikethroughs and boldface additions so you can see the changes that were recommended.

Submitted by Holley Ulbrich

Recap of February Meeting – Working Together for Better Health

An estimated 45 LWWOP Members and guests attended the program which explored efforts underway to improve the health of Oconee and Pickens County residents and to identify priorities for public policy change. **Misty Lee**, a Community Engagement Manager with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control focused her presentation on policy, systems, and environmental change that seeks to reduce the burden of disease. She talked about health problems, disparities, and the use of Data Walks to determine priorities. Both Oconee and Pickens have prioritized behavioral health and healthy living/chronic disease. Oconee is also working on access to care and maternal and child health.

Among the opportunities to make an impact is to address the persistent problem of smoking which contributes to excessive deaths from chronic lung and other diseases. Local ordinances against smoking have been shown to be effective. However, the County and only four municipalities in Pickens have gained certification in the statewide program, Smoke Free Palmetto State. **Wendi Hill**, Tobacco Program Manager, “Just Say Something,” shared efforts to advocate for the city of Greer, to pass an ordinance to qualify for the Smoke Free Palmetto State certification. **Janet Marsh** and **Janie Shipley** shared information on actions taken or planned by LWVSC related to health which is one of three LWVSC priorities for education and advocacy 2023-2025. The Program covers all the priorities that the county coalitions are working on, so our League is in a great position to support the Healthy County Coalitions.

LWVOP created the Health Care Team in April 2021, initially to promote Medicaid expansion. However, it was put on the back burner because there was not enough support to override a probable veto by the Governor. Work continues in anticipation of a more successful attempt in the future. **Teresa Arnold**, registered lobbyist for health care for LWVSC, coordinates the COVERSC coalition’s work on access to care, including Medicaid Expansion. A study by the South Carolina Legislature will analyze factors of supply and demand which is expected to highlight changes needed including Medicaid expansion.

LWVSC’s Working Group for Health Policy has offered Webinars on Access to Care (2022) and Birth Outcomes (2023). Following the Birth Outcomes webinar LWVSC sent a letter of support for a Nurse Practice Act which will provide for full scope of practice for advanced practice nurses. We are testifying at the state level and during County Legislative Delegation meetings in opposition to H4624, the transgender health care bill. In March, LWVSC and local Leagues will join Planned Parenthood and other organizations to obtain signatures for a petition on access to abortion.

Submitted by Sandra Land and Janie Shipley

Environmental Tip for March

If you wish to ditch your big plastic jug of laundry detergent, you can try one of the new laundry sheets like Earth Breeze or Earthwash. They are bio-degradable and come in recyclable cardboard packages with instructions on how to use them in front-loading or top loading washing machines. For drying your laundry try reusable wool dryer balls instead of dryer sheets. All the above can be ordered online if not available in your grocery store.

Preview of March 19 Meeting – Preserving our Southern Forests

Our Southern Forests: Climate, Conservation, and Justice in the U.S. South Featuring: Adam Colette, Programs Director for the Dogwood Alliance

Adam Colette is Programs Director for the Dogwood Alliance (dogwoodalliance.org) located in North Carolina. He will speak on issues related to protecting our southern forests in the era of climate change along with justice issues related to deforestation and protecting our ecosystems. The Dogwood Alliance believes that we must heal our relationship with the earth. And to do this, we need to transform forest management in the United States. Healthy, natural forests are our best defense against a changing climate, and that’s why we need to keep them standing.

Submitted by Ellie Taylor

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 ten books. Two adult books are included in the challenge. The remainder are cataloged in the young adult and/or children’s section. A total of 99 books are targeted for challenge and removal from the library, as of this writing. The books specifically targeted are those with LGBTQ+ themes or that grapple with the uncomfortable realities of race and racism in America.

There is no constitutional justification for allowing members of the community to dictate reading lists for other adults or young readers who are not their own children.

CAFE invites members of our local League and interested pro-literacy community members to attend the next library board meeting on March 21, 2024, 6pm, at the Sarlin Library (Liberty branch) 15 S. Palmetto Street, Liberty, South Carolina 29657 to support and/or speak in defense of the freedom to read.

Strong community support is needed in our efforts to defend our public library. Please consider inviting a member of CAFE to speak to your community, faith, or social group to help inform the public of this serious assault on the freedom to read.

Contact **Reba Kruse** at reba.kruse@gmail.com if you would like more information or to schedule a speaker.

Proposed Local Program

Strikethroughs and boldface indicate changes or additions

Education

Adequate financing of education, greater fiscal autonomy for school boards, **and access to diversity in reading material.** ~~and structure of Pickens County School Board.~~

- The LWVOP believes our schools should be adequately financed. Therefore, we support increased taxes, if necessary, for Pickens and Oconee County schools.
- The LWVOP supports greater fiscal autonomy for the School Boards of Trustees in Pickens and Oconee Counties.
- **The LWVOP supports free access to uncensored reading materials in classrooms, school libraries, and public libraries, and uncensored curricula.**

Growth Management

Intentional and collaborative growth management in the two-county area (Oconee and Pickens) of South Carolina.

- The LWVOP supports intentional and collaborative growth management in the two-county areas (Oconee and Pickens) of South Carolina.
- The LWVOP supports regular consultations among **local appointed and elected** public entities whose duties are related to growth and development, *including* ~~and local elected bodies~~ city councils, county councils, school boards, **and planning boards and/or commissions.**
- The LWVOP also encourages an open and frequent dialogue between these agencies and the public on growth management.
- The LWVOP supports the concept of managing growth to preserve and enhance quality of life for all residents, old and new, through the effective and coordinated use of such land use management tools as conservation easements, purchase of development rights, development impact fees, **annexation, provision of infrastructure, overlays,** and zoning where appropriate.

Representative Government

Open, accountable, adequately funded, well-functioning local governments.

- The LWVOP supports, **having** an odd number of members of committees, commissions, and councils, including a seven member Pickens County Council, **in order to avoid ties.**
- **LWVOP supports an open, transparent, and accessible process for appointments to local government boards, committees, and commissions.**
- **The LWVOP supports adequate funding and staffing for the Oconee and Pickens County Election Boards.**

How to Stop Mis- and Disinformation

Once you've spotted inaccurate information, follow these tips to keep it from spreading (and get it removed):

1. **Don't engage:** It may be tempting to comment on an inaccurate Facebook post about how wrong it is, or to click on it to read all the writer's claims, but don't! Every like, click, share, and comment contributes to the piece's rate of engagement, which tells whatever website you're on that it's good content that they should show to more people. Many outlets take advantage of this, posting headlines that they know will have you firing back a response – because good or bad, that response will promote their piece.
2. **Share correct information:** For every incorrect piece of info you see or hear, try to share one that's correct. Instead of creating further discourse around something you don't want people to hear, get people talking about what you do want them to hear.
3. **Report when needed:** Whenever you see disinformation online, report it to ReportDisinfo.org. You can also report most social media posts to the platforms themselves.

Interested in learning more about mis- and disinformation? Stay in touch and get updates on the *LWV Women Power Democracy Project*, an effort to advance public understanding of our government and reduce inaccurate information.

Adapted from article on LWV website; submitted by Pat Spurlock, Co-President

New Member Bio

Sue Schneider lives in Seneca, South Carolina and participates in various community and recreational activities. She takes courses at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) and serves as the Chair of the Curriculum Team. In her spare time, Sue enjoys pickleball, lake activities, and visiting her grandchildren.

Sue has spent more than 35 years working on environmental experience with water utilities in South Carolina and Department of Energy (DOE) sites in New York and Ohio. She retired in 2022 as the Chief Executive Officer of Spartanburg Water, a regional water utility in South Carolina providing 200,000 residents with drinking water and wastewater services.



Prior to moving to South Carolina, Sue worked at Department of Energy (DOE) sites where she served as the Manager of Environmental Affairs. In her early career, Sue supported the clean-up and disposal of hazardous and industrial waste at subsidiaries of Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI). In that role she provided consulting and support for various manufacturing industries throughout the Midwest.

Is It Time for You to Run for Office?

Has it ever occurred to you that you would like to serve in Congress? Or that you would like to be on the local school board? Or perhaps you know someone who would make a good member of the SC House of Representatives. Filing begins at noon on March 16 and continues through noon on April 1. Now's your chance to have direct input, if you are not satisfied with the performance of those serving in office now. According to SCVOTES.gov, filing opens for candidates seeking nominations for:

- U.S. House of Representatives
- State Senate
- State House of Representatives
- Multi-county district offices
- Solicitor Circuits 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16)
- Various countywide and less than countywide offices

In Oconee and Pickens Counties, those “various countywide and less than countywide” offices include sheriff, clerk of court, coroner, county treasurer, county council, school board, auditor, various watershed conservation district positions and soil and water commissioners. In Pickens County, races will also be held in County Council districts 3, 4, 5 and 6. School Board races in Pickens will be held in districts 1, 3 and 5. In Oconee County, School Board and County Council races will be held in districts 2, 4, and 5. Filing takes place at the election office in each county. Contact them for details on specific races, filing fees, etc. Please help spread the word. Democracy benefits from having a diversity of voices to come up with innovative solutions to the challenges faced by governments including climate change adaptation, social inequity, and the changing economic development landscape.

Linda Gahan (Pickens) and Janie Shipley (Oconee), LWVOP Directors of Outreach and Engagement

Save the Date! 2024 State Council: Building Our Power



Event Date:

May 04, 2024, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Event Location:

Midlands Technical College-Beltline Campus

Save the date! Details to come.

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.