

Co-President's Message

Labor Day is the unofficial end of summer and the beginning of a new year of programming. Our 2023-24 lineup includes in-the-news topics such as censorship and book bans in our public schools and libraries; transparency and accountability of the U.S. Supreme Court; as well as maternal and child health care. The Health, Environment, Education, and SAFE



Pat Spurlock

Working Groups will keep us well informed and prepared for action when legislation and court cases are proposed or filed.

LWVOP is initiating a new opportunity to engage your participation—Local Outreach and Engagement led by **Linda Gahan** and **Janie Shipley**. Intrigued? You will learn more about this initiative in October and November.

Two teams are updating the Oconee and Pickens County Directories of Public Officials. The updates will be available after the certification of the November 7 municipal elections.

The candidates for Oconee and Pickens Counties elections are set. The Vote411 and candidate forum teams will be seeking additional volunteers. Don't wait for their calls. Volunteer now! This message is abbreviated to make room for the a bundance of information to follow.

Enjoy this marvelous fall weather. See you on Tuesday, September 19, 7:00 p.m. at the Clemson United Methodist Church! **Oh...one more thing.** If you paid your membership dues for 2023-24, Thank You! If you have not, please bring them to the Sept. 19 meeting or mail to **LWVOP, P.O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633**. \$60 for primary membership plus \$30 for each additional household member; \$10 for a student membership.

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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
 Eleanor Hare

Calendar of Events

Sept. 11 & 18	Voter Education Series, Pickens Co. Libraries	See flyer on back page for details.
Sept. 19	Freedom to Read: Censorship and Book Bans	7 p.m., Clemson United Methodist
Sept. 21	Maternal and Infant Health in SC	LWVSC webinar, 6 p.m.
October	Candidate Forums	To Be Announced
Oct. 17	Supreme Court Shadow Docket	7 p.m., Clemson United Methodist
November 7	Municipal Elections	Oconee and Pickens Counties

Clemson United Methodist Church, 300 Frontage Road, Clemson, (864-633-5242)

We Have a New Meeting Place

LWVOP will no longer meet at OLLI. They have ended the community partner program and the rental rates are way beyond our budget. After checking around, we made new arrangements. Our regular program meetings (the 3rd Tuesday of September, October, November, January, February, March, and April) will be held at Clemson United Methodist Church, 300 Frontage Road, accessed from Highway 123. The church has plenty of convenient parking, the price is right, the facilities are good, and they are happy to work with us. We are working on arrangements for the holiday party. The annual meeting will be a dinner event at Occasions as it has been in the past. [Directions to the meeting room.](#) The entrance is the Christian Life Center, the (fourth) building on the left side of the church. Parking is across from the entrance.

Some of you are interested in observing the board meetings. We will be meeting in person at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 230 Pendleton Road, Clemson, which also has a good price! We will have a zoom option for board members who are not able to attend in person. If you would like to watch the board meetings (2nd Tuesday at 5:00 pm), just let Pat Spurlock or me know and we will send you a link. Visitors to the meeting do not have privileges of the floor but can put comments or questions in the chat room. Someone will monitor and respond. See you in our new digs!

Submitted by Holley Ulbrich, Co-President

Stay Informed with the LWVOP Website and Social Media

Come to the LWVOP homepage at LWVOP.ORG for a preview of what is happening within our league. The homepage not only features information about upcoming events, but also includes quick links to the Event Calendars, *The VOTER*, and more. The LWVOP “Upcoming Events Calendar” provides dates, times, and links to information for meetings of the Board of Voter Registration and Election Board, School Board meetings, County Council meetings, etc. For in-depth information on the important work in which many members are involved, click on the “**ACTION TAB**,” and to view events other state leagues are offering, click on the “**EVENTS TAB**”. Stay informed and visit the LWVOP website often!

Submitted by Carol Asalon

Facebook has performed well so far in August. We've increased our reach by 167, up 58% from the previous 28 days. Thanks to everyone who is following and liking our posts. This really increases our outreach. This month we have posted about Women's Inequality Day, Power the Polls (recruiting poll workers) ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, March on Washington, StraightTalk 2023: Our Fragile Democracy, and the Voter Education Series. The most popular post was about the SC Voting Rights Convening Conference, attended by **Janet and Ken Marsh**.

We have also added an Instagram account this month, to reach a younger audience. You can see the page in your browser without being a member or downloading the app here: <https://www.instagram.com/lwvoconeepickens/>. If you are already on Instagram, please follow our page and like our posts. Both Facebook and Instagram allow us to post information very quickly and can keep you up to date on issues and happenings in your local, state, and national communities. Feel free to reach out if there is an item you'd like us to share.

Submitted by Cherie Walker

ACLU/NAACP Book Banning Case in Pickens County

The lawsuit, which is ongoing, is against the Pickens County School Board's decision to ban "Stamped Racism, Antiracism, and You" from classrooms, libraries, and media centers. We are asking that it be returned to the areas from which it was removed.

The August edition of the School Library Journal contains an article written by **Andrew Bauld** concerning organizations and people who are fighting against banning books. **Reba Kruse** and NAACP President **Shelia Crawford** were interviewed in May about the lawsuit against the school district. We are not alone in the fight. Please read the article to see what others have to say as well. Our section is the last part of the article. When we fight, we win!

This is the link to the digital copy of the article: <https://www.slj.com/story/Fed-Up-and-Filing-Suit-for-Intellectual-Freedom>

Climate Change is Alive and Well – and Worsening. What Can We Do?

For decades the alarm has been sounding: our rampant use of fossil fuels is creating an atmospheric layer of heat-trapping CO2 that will create climate chaos. Natural gas, landfills, and cattle emit methane that is even stronger than CO2. Yet both awareness and action have been slowed due to our complete dependence on gas-guzzling transportation along with other fossil fuel dependencies in all aspects of our lives. Now we are seeing daily evidence that our weather is being impacted worldwide. What can you and I do to combat climate change and change the future for our families? The answer is both personal and systemic.

The Paris Agreement, signed in 2015 after years of negotiating, binds countries to reducing emissions while providing adaptation to climate impacts through financing a low-carbon economy (<https://www.carbon-brief.org/analysis-the-final-paris-climate-deal/>). This means LWV will follow legislation at all levels of government. Climate issues have political ramifications that can cause resistance from officials and their constituents. For example, Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act is loaded with strategies that can impact climate change by creating incentives for clean energy and equity-centered environmental justice investments. These systemic changes include limiting gasoline and natural gas, supporting energy efficiency in all we do, and expanding access to renewables: hydro, solar, and wind. We need to make certain our South Carolina government is tapping into these opportunities. In South Carolina the Sierra Club has a full-time paid lobbyist who works with the LWVSC lobbyists to support positive environmental legislation.

What can we do in our personal lives and as an organization to reduce our carbon footprints? We now have our own LWVOP Environmental Working Group (EWG) as well as a statewide EWG. The goal of both is to educate ourselves about actions personally, locally, statewide, and nationally that reduce our impacts on climate change. For example, LWVOP can continue to promote carpooling, reduction of paper and plastic waste, and create events that positively role model needed changes in our own daily lives. Individually we can educate ourselves about the science of climate destruction, so we promote change that prevents negative impacts. We will stay alert to local issues in Oconee and Pickens counties. Watch *The VOTER* for monthly ideas and attend our LWVOP and statewide EWG gatherings. Our LWVOP EWG will meet on Wednesday, September 6, at 5:30 p.m. Please email Ellie Taylor at elptyl@bellsouth.net to be placed on either or both EWG mailing lists.

Submitted by Ellie Taylor

2023 November Municipal Elections

Municipal elections will be held on November 7, 2023, for Oconee County (Salem, Seneca, Walhalla, Westminster, and West Union) and Pickens County (Central, Easley, Liberty, Norris, Pickens, and Six Mile). **Sarah McNeill** is coordinating at least five candidate forums in October (Walhalla, Central, Easley, Pickens, and Six Mile). City of Clemson elections will be in 2024. She will be calling on members for LOTS of help. Vote411 “voting information you need” will again publish candidate responses to League-generated questions in early October. **Alice Flower** is coordinating this effort. **Eleanor Hare** and **Ruth Reed** will coordinate publicity for Vote411. Help and suggestions are welcomed.

Submitted by Sarah McNeill and Alice Flower.

Education Action Committee Formed

In response to intense unconstitutional attacks against public schools and public libraries to ban books and censor classroom discussions, a coalition of local citizens with the League of Women Voters of Oconee and Pickens Counties (LWVOP) was formed in 2023.

We are Community Advocates for Education (CAFE). We support the freedom to read. We advocate for accessible, high-quality education and comprehensive library services that empower individuals of all ages and backgrounds to thrive in an ever-evolving world. We believe in the transformative power of public education and libraries to nurture informed, engaged, and empowered citizens who contribute to a thriving, democratic society.

We inform the public and advocate for uncensored access to information in our public schools and public libraries. We support the dedication, professionalism, and expertise of our public educators and librarians. We recognize free speech and the free exchange of ideas as foundational principles of a healthy democracy. Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction.

This group meets regularly and is actively engaged in the community to influence public opinion and policy.

Contact **Reba Kruse** reba.kruse@gmail.com if you would like to join our team.

September Program The Freedom to Read: Combatting Censorship in our Public Schools and Libraries

The September 19 program will be presented by the Education Action Committee whose goal is to defeat unconstitutional efforts to ban books and censor curriculum/programs in our public schools and libraries. The objective is to inform the public and offer a call to action and resources to get involved in advocating for public schools and public libraries.

The presentation will include three speakers: **Josh Malkin**, Senior Advocacy Strategist, ACLU of South Carolina; **Cassie Owens Moore**, Librarian, Seneca Middle School and Intellectual Freedom Chair South Carolina Association of School Librarians; and **Reba Kruse**, Advocate with Community Advocates for Education and Chair, LWVOP Education Action Committee.

Moderator **Holley Ulbrich** will guide the discussion. Members of the audience will provide questions for the panel.

New Member Bios



Paula Holcombe is originally from Greenwood and has lived in Clemson since 1990. She attended Clemson University, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics with a Computer Science option.

After graduation, she worked at several companies as an Applications Analyst. In 1992, she went to work for Clemson University in the department of Computing and Information Technology as a Systems Analyst where she recently retired. Later in her career, she returned to school at Clemson and earned an MBA in Business Analytics.

Over the years, she has volunteered with Girl and Boy Scouts. She volunteers in her church, Clemson United Methodist, where she has been a member since moving back to Clemson. Married with two grown children, she enjoys spending time hiking, working puzzles, playing card games, traveling, and visiting her children and her four sisters.

Ellen Ellick was born and raised in Nebraska but lived in St Louis for the past 30+ years. She worked as a newspaper reporter, community college English teacher, employee communications writer for the Union Pacific Railroad, and public information officer for the St. Louis Health Department.

Ellen has a daughter and son-in-law, both employed at Clemson University and two granddaughters. Ellen enjoyed the dog rescue organization she founded in St. Louis and continues to enjoy birdwatching, reading, writing, travel, walking, knitting, and watching St. Louis Cardinals baseball games.



Beyond the Vote: Serving as Public Officials

On August 15, the LWVOP celebrated Women's Equality Day. Women in public office in Oconee County and City of Clemson were honored as special guests. Approximately 45 attended the reception including 5 elected officials, LWVOP Members, and others. Special guests attending the event were **Amanda Holder** and **Denise McCormick** from Oconee County Schools, **Alesia Smith** and **Catherine Watt** from Clemson City Council, and **Claiborne Linvill** from Pickens County Council. Co-President, **Holley Ulbrich**, moderated the program which concluded with brief announcements from LWVOP teams and committees regarding priorities.

Co-President **Holley Ulbrich** said, "the reception provided an opportunity to honor a growing number of female elected public officials in Oconee and Pickens Counties. How to encourage more women to run for public office and to support female public officials once elected were topics of conversation and exchange of ideas during the social hour.

The Women's Equality Day celebration is held each year to recognize the August 26, 1920, ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the *U.S. Constitution* granting some women the right to vote. Although the event highlighted some of the progress made, LWV recognizes that there is so much more to be done. [Support Women's Equality Now | MyLO \(lww.org\)](#) Let us heed this call to Action from **Nancy Williams**, President, League of Women Voters of South Carolina in celebration of *Women's Inequality Day*, "One more day that women are **unequal** across the United States. We see this in South Carolina and throughout the country where we are denied abortion and healthcare rights, job security, equal pay for the same work, and much more. Women continue to be in danger in South Carolina. We must keep the pressure on and stand up for women's rights."

Submitted by Sandra Land.

LWVSC Webinar on Birth Outcomes in South Carolina

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina is deeply concerned with the state of birth outcomes and maternal and infant health disparities in the Palmetto State. Therefore, we are presenting a webinar, entitled: "Maternal and Infant Health in South Carolina: Birth Outcomes and the Need for Improved Healthcare." South Carolina is the third worst state in the nation for having a baby!

This webinar will be held on **Thursday, September 21, 2023**, at 6 p.m. Panelists include: **Monty Robertson**, Executive Director of the Alliance for a Healthier South Carolina and former chair of the Birth Outcomes Task Force; **Kristen Shealy**, Deputy Director of the DHEC Bureau of Maternal and Child Health; **Lesley Rathbun**, Member Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee/Certified Nurse Midwife, and a practicing obstetrician to be confirmed. Pre-registration is required. Details, including a link for registration, will be available through LWVSC and LWVOP social media. Mark your calendar. Watch for the registration link.


Submitted by Janie Shipley and Sandra Land.

Local Government Meeting Information

Clemson City Council
1st and 3rd Monday, 6:30 p.m.
Seneca City Council
2nd Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.
Pickens County School Board
4th Monday, 7:00 p.m.

Pickens County Council
1st Monday, 6:30 p.m.
Oconee County Council
Tuesday, 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 p.m.
Oconee County School Board
3rd Monday, 6:00 p.m.

***Please confirm dates, time, and agenda on the meeting websites.*



VOTER EDUCATION SERIES

MONDAY AUGUST 21 • 5:30PM
VOTER REGISTRATION & PREPARING TO VOTE
 Village Library - Pickens

MONDAY AUGUST 28 • 5:30PM
EARLY VOTING, ABSENTEE VOTING & ACCESSIBLE VOTING
 Sarlin Library - Liberty

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 11 • 5:30PM
VOTING EQUIPMENT
 Hampton Memorial Library - Easley

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 18 • 5:30PM
CANVASSING AND CERTIFYING AN ELECTION
 Central-Clemson Library

PLAY | CONNECT | LEARN | SHARE

