

The Voter: February 2025

From League of Women Voters of Oconee and Pickens Counties <lwvop1@218343882.mailchimpapp.com>

Date Fri 1/31/2025 4:36 PM

To Carol Asalon-Retired <carol.asalon@retiree.furman.edu>

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Calendar of Events

February 1, 9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

South Carolina LEAD (League Education & Advocacy Day)

Midlands Technical College—Beltline Campus

Columbia, SC

February 18, 4:00 p.m.

Monthly Members Meeting: “Sustainability”

(Carolyn will forward more information about the meeting)

Clemson United Methodist Church

300 Frontage Road, Clemson, SC

February 19, 5:00 p.m.

LWVOP Board Meeting

Zoom

All members are invited to observe the meeting.

Contact [Pat Spurlock](#) for Zoom link.

February 21, 10:00 a.m.

Advocacy Training Webinar

OLLI Building, 100 Thomas Green Blvd, Clemson, SC

Contact [Holley Ulbrich](#) for more information.

[Click for a list of local Public Meetings](#)

We must show our interest and determination to make a difference in the current political environment. Please make an effort to attend some of these meetings.

Radical Hope

These words are from our LWVUS President Dianna Wynn, on January 21:

The election is now over, and those who were elected are no longer candidates.

As a nonpartisan organization, the League has every right to call out statements, actions, and policies that are counter to our values and principles.

Advocating for gender and racial equity is not partisan.

Calling out attacks on democracy is not partisan.

Our mission is to “defend democracy.” We cannot live up to our mission if we are unwilling to speak up and speak out.

She shares one of her strategies to remain focused and engaged: radical hope.

Radical hope is a deeply held belief that our world can be better coupled with a commitment to engage in collective action. Radical hope drives activism in all its forms, both large and small. Hope is not always easy to hold onto. But it is essential. From Seneca Falls to Selma to Stonewall, hope has always fueled activism. And hope will sustain us through our work as we move forward.

Yesterday’s events have dramatically changed the course of our nation’s history. We don’t yet know what the future holds for us. But whatever it is, the League remains steadfast in its commitment to defend democracy in ways that fuel the fight for human rights.

Monthly Meeting: Sustainability

Tony Tidwell, Director of Urban Land Management for the City of Clemson will speak on the City's initiatives related to sustainability and environmental protection. Tony is a leader across the Upstate for his dedication to our green spaces and our waterways, working to increase local "certified wildlife habitats" and monarch butterfly habitats.

Tony will answer your questions about land management work across the City (and counties), and what the plan is to increase trails and green space in the face of development. The discussion will include a review of the City's tree canopy, efforts to preserve and replant after Helene, and what we can all do to help our environment. Tony is an incredible person and contributes greatly to our community, so his talk is not to be missed.

Local Program/Platform Planning

A huge thank you to the 24 members who braved bitter cold and snow to attend the 2025-26 Program planning meeting. The members gave consensus to maintaining the following LWVOP Program (aka Platform).

- Education: Adequate financing of education, greater fiscal autonomy for school boards, and access to diversity in reading material.
- Growth Management: The LWVOP supports intentional and collaborative growth management in the two-county areas (Oconee and Pickens) of South Carolina.
- [Representative Government](#): Open, accountable, adequately funded, well-functioning local governments.

The following priorities were selected from The Program (aka Platform).

Priority: Public Schools and 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.

Actions

- Attend local school and library board meetings to support the League's position.
- Oppose legislation that censors materials.
- Inform the public and advocate for uncensored access to information in our public schools and public libraries.

Priority: Civic Education and Engagement

Over 20 years ago, the [League of Women Voters](#) launched Making Democracy Work®, a campaign focusing on five key indicators of a healthy democracy. Two of

these indicators are civic education and civic participation — because, as a nonpartisan voting rights and democracy policy organization, the League knows civic information and involvement are key to a healthy American democracy.

Actions

- Promote Community Dialogues to bridge the political divide.
- Establish Observer Corps to determine where electorate and public officials are lacking information/civic education.
- Continue existing voter education activities (VOTE411, Candidate and Community Forums, The VOTER, letters to the editor).

—Carolyn Bishop-McLeod

Suggested/Approved LWVSC Positions

The consensus from the membership meeting recommended adopting the positions found in the LWVSC Program and Action Agenda 2023/-25. In addition to these positions, [the following recommendations](#) will be presented to the LWVSC Board for consideration at the Convention.

Big Change for Paying Dues is Here

ChapterSpot is the new League membership platform that will provide a centralized portal where any person can **join** the League or **renew** their membership; it will also provide membership rosters for local leagues. Additional communication tools will be available that we might want to use, such as emailing.

ChapterSpot will go live on Feb 3, 2024. Our webmaster for LWVOP, Carol Asalon, will have installed the software so that the “Join” button on the front page of our website will link to the new system. We are all crossing our fingers that the system will work seamlessly. There is no need for a password (yay!); rather you enter your email address to receive a code to enter for access.

Dues

As LWVOP members have paid dues for 2025 over the past several months, we will not need to renew it for several more months, giving the system time to settle down.

New members will simply go to lwwop.org and use the “Join” button to access the system.

Payment is by ACH (electronic payment using the numbers on the bottom of the check), debit card, or credit card. Members can still pay by check or cash to the treasurer, who will enter the new member into the system.

Dues will be whatever you want to pay above \$20. There are no longer categories for membership. If we, as a local league, want to subsidize \$20 membership fees for those who cannot pay, we may do so. The recommended amount will be \$75, the national average. The split will be 33% national, 47% state, and 20% local.

Membership Roster

Current information on members (email address, phone, street address) will be available to the local roster manager (currently our treasurer). Also, members will be able to view and correct information in their individual entry.

Summary

Once we get used to this system, and if it works as promised, I think it will relieve some of the tedious workload of our treasurer and our webmaster in keeping track of membership payment. We should spend less time reminding each other that we haven't paid dues. (I've been on both ends of that process!) Presumably, income will go up with increased membership from the lack of set dues; that presumes that those who can pay more will do so, a reasonable assumption for a nonprofit organization, I think.

— *Ruth Reed, Management Team Member*

Advocacy Training


For those of you who didn't attend LEAD but want to learn more about how to advocate effectively, especially at the state level, we have a treat for you. Lynn Teague, our redoubtable state lobbyist, and friends have made a one-hour webinar about how to lobby in South Carolina, including following bills and effective communication with legislators. We are sponsoring a free to the public presentation for the webinar at OLLI on Friday, February 21. If you can't make that, feel free to watch it on your own from the [LWV web site](#), or invite a few friends to watch it with you.

— *Holley Ulbrich*


We had great attendance at the special community meeting on January 25. ACLU of SC Advocacy Director Josh Malkin and members of Community Advocates For Education (CAFE) ways to protect the freedom to read and learn. Sponsors of this meeting included LWVOP, CAFE, NAACP Pickens County Branch, NAACP Oconee County Branch, ACLU of SC, E3 Foundation, and ProTruth SC.

Coffee Get-togethers

Kathy Bargeron has hosted several coffee get-togethers so that members can better get to know each other. She has hosted two so far. If you are interested in attending one, or wish to assist, reach out to Kathy.

 Five people sit at a table drinking coffee. They are all looking at the camera and smiling.

Left to right: Candace Schutt, Kathy Bargeron, Dave Todd, Bev Sevick and Janie Shipley.

 Seven people sit at a table drinking coffee. They are all looking at the camera and smiling.

Left to right: Kathy Bargeron, Laura Zenteno, Pamela Davidson-Smith, Joan Kobe, Sheila Rondeau, Linda Gorry and Dave Todd.

New Member

Patty Higgins

Patty Higgins, a Kentuckian, spent 32 years as an educator in Georgia. She was a special education leader who helped open public education to handicapped children, establish the GA Psychoeducational Network for Emotionally Disturbed Children and

was president of the GA Federation Council for Exceptional Children. She spent her final years at the GA Dept. Of Education in Special Education and Title I. She and her life partner spent 19 wonderful retirement years in Long Creek, SC, exploring agriculture (vegetables and flowers), fishing, crafting, construction, and everything else old ladies love to do! Now, at 80, Patty is passionate about doing her small part to save the constitution, equality, and rule of law. Knowing the need to have family close in one's twilight years, Patty has established her "dying home" in Shelbyville, KY., but, she's not quite ready to do that yet! She just learned to play bridge online so she can continue that hobby with her KY friends. She joined LWV to keep abreast of politics in SC and be ready when the majority once again join together to continue our journey toward the American dream of unity, equality, the rule of law and leadership through example!

Laura Zenteno

Laura has recently retired from Corning Incorporated after 27 years in operations management. She and her husband Luis moved to Oconee County, SC from Central New York. The days are filled with volunteering at Clemson University Career and Development Center as an Executive in Residence, as well as volunteering at the Prisma Oconee Memorial Hospital. Laura and her husband are active members in the OCDP.

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