



## Calendar of Events

May 16-17, beginning at 4:00 p.m.

### **Forging into the Future**

Greenville Technical College Center for Manufacturing Innovation  
575 Millenium Blvd, Greenville, SC

May 20, 6:00 p.m.

### **Annual Dinner Meeting**

Occasions at Wedgefield, 155118 Mile Road, Central, SC, 29630

[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.

## Forging into the Future

Please join League members from around the state as we forge our future at [LWVSC's 2025 Biennial Convention in Greenville on May 16-17](#). We're planning 1.5 days of speakers, workshops, business, and awards at Greenville Tech's Center for Manufacturing Innovation. The LWVOP can provide funding to help offset costs for up to eight delegates.

Every two years delegates from South Carolina Leagues gather to adopt a state Program and Action Agenda and a 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. Once again, this year's program will be stellar!

## LWVOP Annual Dinner Meeting

**May 20, 6 p.m.**

**Occasions at Wedgefield, 155118 Mile Road, Central, SC, 29630**

Reserve your place before Wednesday, May 14:

1. [Email us](#) with your name and the number of persons attending;
2. Send check for \$30 per person to:  
LWVOP  
P. O. Box 802  
Clemson, SC, 29631

We will hold our annual business meeting and then hear from our special speaker, Dr. Donal M. McKale, who will speak on **“How Do Autocracies Happen?”** Dr. McKale is Professor Emeritus at Clemson University and the author or editor of eight books on Nazi Germany, World War II, and the Holocaust. He has also published two books on Clemson University history. In 2006, he received Clemson University’s Class of 1939 Award for Faculty Excellence.

## LWVOP Local Program 2024-26

### Education

Adequate financing of education, greater fiscal autonomy for school boards, and access to diversity in reading material.

- 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 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 open, transparent, and accessible processes for appointments to local government boards, committees, and commissions.

- The LWVOP supports adequate funding and staffing for the Oconee and Pickens County Election Boards. The following priorities were selected from this Program.

## LWVOP Nominating Committee

*Respectfully submitted, Holley Ulbrich (chair), Linda Gahan, Cynthia Warner, Kathy Bargeron and Cherie Walker.*

**President:** Pat Spurlock

**Vice-President:** Linda Gorry

**Secretary:** Carolyn Bishop-McLeod

**Treasurer:** Margie Barnes

**Elected directors** (two years): Kathy Bargeron, Sue Blount, Janet Marsh, Jane McLamarrah

**Elected director** (one year, to fill vacancy by resignation): Janie Shipley

**Nominating committee:** TBA

**Continuing directors** (provided for information only; these do not require a vote): Christine Prado, Carol Asalon, Cherie Walker

## LWV Member Portal

The League of Women Voters has rolled out their new [Member Portal](#) system. From this portal, you can pay your dues and update your information, as well as find other resources. Here's how to access it:

- Click on the link and enter your email, to receive a verification code, required for login.
- Check your email, get the code at the bottom of the page (small print), go back and enter the verification code.
- After entering the code, you will be logged into the system.

## Want to Submit to the Voter?

We are always looking for great content to share with our members. If you have something you wish to share, including the great work being done by League members, let us know! We need the content submitted by the 21st of each month for inclusion. You can email your submissions to [Pat](#) or [Christine](#).

## Educating Ourselves and the Public

While meeting for coffee, long-time member Eleanor Hare mentioned a book by Miles Taylor, where she was excited to find that the last chapter could have been written by the League of Women Voters. That sounded worth a follow-up! Not remembering the name, I found this:

*Miles Taylor is a national security expert who works in Washington, DC. Taylor previously served as chief of staff at the US Department of Homeland Security, where he published an "Anonymous" essay in The New York Times, blowing the whistle on presidential misconduct.*

Oh. I had forgotten that bit of history! The book is *Blowback*, published in July of 2023, before the 2024 election. Eleanor summarized the book as a call to overcome the extreme split in the country, ending with steps to take to restore democracy—ranked choice voting, for example.

Bemoaning the extreme, emotional split over politics currently is certainly a discussion that has come to the forefront over the past several years. Our recent League presentation by Prof. Darren Linvill on the evolution of disinformation highlighted the Russian strategy to use social media to do exactly that. Going back even further, Braver Angels was founded to address the problem by promoting civil discourse. The League has published a statement that we are in a constitutional crisis, among many other efforts.

We have a year before campaigning for the midterm elections start. We will need educate ourselves on matters pertaining to being able to cast an educated vote. There are more than 100 of us—enough to have an impact in Oconee and Pickens counties, at least. CAFE has already had an impact; our candidate forums have a very long history of being appreciated as fair and balanced, and, of course, voter registration has been a mainstay of League activity. [Vote411](#) is a fantastic resource for educating local voters. What's next? Let us know your thoughts.

## Reflections and Actions from LWVOP Membership Committee

LWVOP growth in membership has been amazing, 26 new members since January 1, 2025! WE ARE DELIGHTED! Most positive occurrences, however, have a downside.

The “downside” is that it is difficult for our Membership Team of four to keep up with the welcoming protocol we want to follow with new members. We believe our members are our most valuable resource; our welcoming protocol reflects that. To briefly highlight a number of accomplishments of new members:

- Assumed management of the all-important VOTE411 website of election/voting information.
- Videoed demonstrations in Seneca and Anderson that appeared on our social media and the social media of others.

While naming these contributions is important, just as important is clearly saying that LWVOP welcomes everyone and whatever they can contribute. (Personally, I didn't contribute much to LWVOP until I retired.)

So, what is the protocol that we follow to welcome members?

1. Send a welcoming email of information and offer to visit over coffee, etc.
2. Visit at time and location of member's choice.
3. Receive a brief bio and photo from new member to appear in LWVOP monthly VOTER.
4. Invite to a group orientation to the League (held quarterly).
5. Introduce at monthly meetings and other occasions, including sponsoring “neighborhood” gatherings.

Have we missed you in one or more steps of our protocol? For example, did our welcoming email get sidelined somehow? Do you have questions about the League? Would you like ideas about how you can get involved? Would you like to talk with a person on the Membership Team?

After the Annual Meeting May 20, most LWVOP activities will cease (including the VOTER) until August when we gather for our traditional Welcome Back/Women's Equality Day Party. However, some LWVOP activities will continue through the summer. Certainly our website, Facebook and Instagram will continue with current information, and probably the weekly Action Alerts. Member's attendance at local Boards and Committees across the two counties will continue, an important aspect of Making Democracy Work!

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments that will help you feel more engaged! That goes for ALL members, not only new members! Reach out to any of us: [Janet Marsh](#), [Ann Fuhr](#), [Kathy Barger](#), and [Janie Shipley](#).

## New Members



### Becky Becker

Becky K. Becker was born and raised in North Dakota, but made her way south during her 30s. She and her husband, Mark Jarzewiak, moved to Seneca when Becky took a job in Performing Arts at Clemson University after having lived in Columbus, GA for 12 years while raising their sons, Jaz and Ian. Becky & Mark love the Upstate's many lakes, hiking trails, and natural spaces to run, and walk their fur baby, Circe. Becky became politically activated in graduate school, but participating in the March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C. in 2004 was a formative

moment. She believes that art and travel are vital forms of education, and that the communities we form will be our saving grace.



## Susan (Sue) Blount

Sue Blount and her husband Kerry moved from the Washington D.C. area to Seneca, South Carolina, in October 2016. While in the D.C. area, Sue worked for Children's National Medical Center, while Kerry was an intelligence analyst.

Sue spent about 40 years in different aspects of health care. Her time working with many different peoples and cultures, as well as participation in mission trips to Honduras, made her sensitive to those who are immigrants. Her first foray into activism occurred during high school in the early 1970s, as she fought to change her school's "mascot" from *Custer's Indians*.

Sue and Kerry are active in their church and enjoy traveling and experiencing the outdoors. Sue has a son and daughter-in-law in Seneca, and Kerry has two daughters in Texas.

Sue feels many of the current administration's policies are unwise, and hopes to peacefully resist those she finds objectionable.





## Shelly Geer

Shelly Geer was born in Washington, DC, and grew up in Silver Spring, Maryland. She graduated from Clemson University and has made Clemson her home since then. She works at Clemson and is married with three grown kids and two wonderful fur babies: a Red Siberian Husky and an English Sheepdog rescue. A lover of the great outdoors; cycling, swimming, hiking, and photography are some of her passions. Environmental stewardship and social justice are core values, as well as women's rights and the protection of our democracy.

## Obituary: Evelyn Kochansky

**April 19, 1920 - April 14, 2025**

For more than a century, Evelyn Rensing Kochansky lived a life of grace and good humor, contagious curiosity and a creative sensibility grounded in science that she passed down to her descendants.

She was born in Brooklyn, New York, the fifth generation of women in her family there. Growing up during the Great Depression, she learned resourcefulness—a trait she continued to display her whole life. As a girl, she spent many weekends practicing drawing at the Brooklyn Museum near her home. She was also an insatiable reader, riding a streetcar to the local library where she would check out the maximum allowable number of books, forming another lifelong habit.

In 1941 Evelyn graduated from Pratt Institute and married her classmate Nicholas Kochansky, who went immediately into World War II, then on to a career in publishing, eventually becoming a Vice President at Scholastic Magazines. Evelyn went to work in mechanical drawing, and for 25 years taught art and science at the King School in Stamford, Connecticut. They raised two children: a scientist and an artist. She also served on the board of the Stamford Museum and Nature Center. Her passions were needlework, gardening, and world travel. She kept meticulous

journals of all their travels—not only words but also sketches of architectural details that caught her eye.

In 1981 Evelyn and her husband retired to a farm in Pickens, South Carolina. The farm eventually became The Rensing Center, a rural creative/environmental retreat founded by Evelyn's daughter Ellen, who lived on adjoining property. Ellen named the center in honor of her mother, and Evelyn became the beloved matriarch for hundreds of international artists and friends who gathered at the center over the years. She walked and rode a golf cart around the property, greeting visitors and engaging with them in a range of educational and community programs. During lively Rensing roundtable dinners, Evelyn anchored the discussion with a wisdom honed over her long and purposeful life. Evelyn was a valued member of the League of Women Voters Oconee & Pickens Counties, along with her daughter, Ellen.

A private memorial service in celebration of Evelyn's life will be held at Ramsey Creek Preserve/Memorial Ecosystems in Westminster, South Carolina, on June 14, 2025. The family will be honoring her memory that week and during later gatherings at The Rensing Center library.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations in her honor to the [South Carolina Talking Book Services](#) or to [Upstate Forever](#).

*Adapted from the Evelyn Kochansky Facebook Post*