

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK IN SC

# Network Update



January 30, 2022

## Redistricting bills are signed. What is next in Columbia?

### Congressional Redistricting

South Carolina's final Congressional plan, initially identified as Senate Amendment 1, was signed by the Governor on January 26 as Act 118. It distorts multiple major communities of interest to produce CD 1 as a coastal district with only 17% BVAP, although the counties involved have Black census populations of 35% in Colleton, 26% in Charleston, 25% in Berkeley, and 18% in Beaufort.

Supporters defend the new Congressional plan by saying it is not much worse than the current map. However, the current map drew criticism as a racial gerrymander when enacted. Department of Justice (DoJ) review of the current map under the Voting Rights Act and litigation regarding the current map were restricted in scope and did not establish that the existing map is an acceptable foundation.

### Voting and Elections

The State Election Commission (SEC) selected a new Executive Director last week, SEC Director of Voter Services Howard Knapp (more information on Mr. Knapp is available at <https://www.scvotes.gov/sec-selects-executive-director>).

However, H.3444 continues to languish on the House calendar. It would disrupt SEC appointments and hiring. Debate has been adjourned every day since sine die in May 2021. One House member, Rep. Bill Taylor, has reported in his constituent newsletter that H.3444 will be taken up this week. This will require either concurrence with Senate amendment or conference committee. While one provision of the Senate version is very unfortunate (commissioners should be able to hire a director without Senate confirmation) and another seems unnecessary (permission for legislative involvement in elections litigation) the remainder of the bill as amended by the Senate is acceptable and could produce improved consistency in election administration by counties. In contrast the House version, which would give the SEC plenary (absolute) authority over county election offices, is entirely unacceptable. Nevertheless, either version of H.3444 would at this time complicate the situation with respect to the hiring of Mr. Knapp and the terms of current commissioners.

Negotiations have not progressed on promising absentee voting bills from last session. It is possible that they will be jettisoned in favor of bills that would aggressively restrict voter access. At present nothing is moving in House Judiciary as chairman Chris Murphy has been absent due to COVID. (They could meet with the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair presiding, but leadership has chosen not to do that.) There also has been no movement on voting and elections in the Senate. Both situations will surely change before long. Bills have been filed that raise serious concerns about equitable access to the ballot, so we will follow this closely.

## **Constitutional Convention Resolutions**

A press conference including Senator Lindsay Graham was held at the State House last week to promote balanced budget amendments such as provided by H.3205, a constitutional convention resolution promoted by ALEC and by wealthy special interests such as the Mercer family. This Convention of States (COS) resolution calls for a balanced federal budget, restrictions on federal authority, and federal term limits. This version of a constitutional convention resolution has been passed in 17 states of the 34 needed for it to become effective.

H.3205 has passed the House and is in a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee chaired by Senator Chip Campsen, who when last heard from supports the measure. The League of Women Voters has posted information on the many dangers of constitutional convention resolutions at [https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/constitutional\\_convention\\_resolutions.pdf](https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/constitutional_convention_resolutions.pdf).

## **And in Other Areas . . .**

Both House and Senate are showing great enthusiasm for culture war bills this year. We don't follow these in the MDW SC Updates but some brief notes are in order for those who share the concerns of the League.

The House is up for election and while some legislators are true believers in the culture wars, many others are riding along. Culture war bills engage and enrage the partisan base and protect incumbents from primary challengers. As is always true when most general elections are noncompetitive, legislators are becoming ever more extreme in their own positions through systemic pressure from the most hyper-partisan voters.

Personhood and a near total abortion prohibition, attacks on truthful history curriculum, and more are moving forward in the General Assembly. League of Women Voters' testimonies on these bills and more are posted at <https://my.lwv.org/south-carolina-state/advocacy/legislative-advocacy>. As all this moves forward, we are pleased to announce that Dr. Janelle Rivers, a very experienced educational professional, has registered to lobby for the League on educational issues. She has already been very busy.

We hope that all of you will continue to follow these and other developments at the State House and make your voices heard.

Lynn Shuler Teague  
VP for Issues and Action, LWVSC  
803 556-9802  
[TeagueLynn@gmail.com](mailto:TeagueLynn@gmail.com)