

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK IN SC

# Network Update

**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS'  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA



21 Sep 2022

## Protecting Our Elections

### South Carolina Elections under Attack

In South Carolina we have been fortunate to have many dedicated election workers at the state and local levels. The State Election Commission (SEC) has been designed to work effectively for the good of all in our state rather than as an arm of a partisan office. There are sometimes problems in need of correction, but there has never been sound reason to doubt the integrity of our state's election system.

The League of Women Voters deeply appreciates that our elections are generally secure and accessible. However, at present, that system is under sustained attack. This has been very recently described in detail by Zak Koeske and Joseph Bustos of *The State* newspaper in an article on the unusually high number of staff losses arising from the often toxic setting in which our election officials now do their work. (<https://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article265908806.html>)

In keeping with that, we note the very important actions of the SEC today in approving a "Code of Conduct for Poll Watchers and Observers" and the "Agency FY 2021-2022 Annual Accountability Report." We especially encourage all who are concerned about our elections to read the Accountability Report, which outlines some of the challenges that have been encountered. It will be posted at <https://scvotes.gov/about-the-sec/accountability-reports/>.

What can we do? All of us who respect the professionalism and integrity that have made our election system accessible and secure should make our support known, both publicly through LTEs and other media and very directly through reaching out to legislators. Those who want to destroy our elections and control them for partisan advantage are not hesitant to make their demands known. We should not hesitate either. We do not seek advantage for any party, but for voters regardless of their party affiliation. Above all, we seek the continued success of our representative democracy.

## Preparing for the 2023 General Assembly Session

Last year the General Assembly passed a bill that substantially altered aspects of our election system. At the same time, concerns at the SEC have led to reinterpretation of some long-standing policies. Some of the changes that have been made are very positive, especially the introduction of no-excuse early voting. We appreciate the work of legislators who shepherded this effort and who were very responsive to issues raised by the League of Women Voters and other concerned organizations. Rep. Brandon Newton (R-Lancaster) was especially helpful.

However, some of the changes made in law and in SEC policy raise concerns, especially as the experiences of the 2022 elections reveal problems that are unintended consequences, oversights, and points that simply may benefit from reconsideration. We are hoping to address these during the 2023 session, working in a bipartisan manner with legislators. Some of the areas in which we have identified needs include:

- problems arising from the short time frame between primary elections and runoffs,
- the need for authorization of email and faxes in the absentee ballot application process,
- the need for explicit legal approval of mobile polling place units,
- improvements in numbers of early voting locations in some counties, and
- adequate funding for county election offices.

We hope that those who receive these MDW Updates will help in this process by letting LWVSC lobbyist Lynn Teague know about problems that become apparent in the upcoming general election that might benefit from legislative correction. We are making a list and checking it twice, so help us work on our 2023 wish list for accessible and secure elections!

As always, thanks to all for what you do --

Lynn

Lynn Shuler Teague

VP for Issues and Action, LWVSC