

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK IN SC

# Network Update

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



May 6, 2022

## MDW SC Update: As the General Assembly Turns

### Early Voting and Election Administration

I have not been updating with every twist and turn of the General Assembly with respect to the voting and election bills that have been moving in both House and Senate — H.3444 (election administration) and H. 4919 (early and absentee voting). I am updating now, although I warn readers that you will not be able to predict the outcome from my summary. It is all unresolved. Only three days of session remain; Sine Die is next Thursday.

There is a basic difference between Senate and House in that the Senate is demanding Senate advice and consent on both State Election Commission (SEC) commissioners and the SEC Executive Director (ED). The House and Governor are adamantly opposed to this. The League's position has been that Senate advice and consent on commissioners is a reasonable provision, with greater reservations about the ED, but we have not felt that it should be an indispensable part of the current package.

Unfortunately, Senate floor commentary on this issue has raised serious concerns about the intended purpose of advice and consent. Senators have interpreted the ED's recommendations to them in 2020 as a highly partisan attack on their preferred policies and the recommendations themselves as terrible "liberal" demands. From the League's perspective, the ED offered for the consideration of legislators and the Governor a reasonable laundry list of potential measures for voter access and safety, with the expectation that they might enact all or none of them as pandemic-related measures at their discretion.

We are also concerned that provisions of great importance to county election offices — where the rubber meets the road on voting — were deleted in the Senate. Primary among these was permission to process absentee mail ballots several days before election day.

In any case, at present the House has committed the Senate version of H.4919, with H.3444 incorporated, to House Judiciary, presumably to die there. Instead of concurring or going to conference with that bill, they have amended eight completely unrelated bills to include their election provisions and are sending them to the Senate in that form. (There has been a somewhat flexible approach to Rules this year. Early voting is definitely not germane to certification of birth certificates or protection of heirs property or any of the other issues addressed in the eight amended bills.)

At this point we can only watch and wonder where this will go. The League is making no predictions, other than that it is clearly too late for any early voting provisions for the 2022 primaries.

## **Redistricting**

The NAACP and ACLU have announced a settlement in their lawsuit regarding the House redistricting map. Changes have been made to avoid dilution of minority votes and we congratulate the parties for a job well done. This does not mean the House map is now exemplary. It remains a map distorted by incumbent and partisan protection, but it is better than it was. The corrected map will not go into effect until 2024.

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