

Dear League Friends,

The fall season is always a busy time for the League of Women Voters. Board members get oriented to their new responsibilities. The League's new fiscal year anticipates growth and challenges. Voter Services kicks off another year of registering voters, planning candidate forums, and getting out the vote.

Yet every day we are learning that these are more than ordinary times. The national LWW declared in April of this year that our country was in a constitutional crisis. Attacks against free speech on campuses and on social media increase. Lack of due process for those detained by immigration and customs officials continue. Pressure for election officials to reveal voters' personal information threatens to build mistrust in voting. Efforts to redistrict congressional districts mid-cycle have sprung up.

To fight back, the League of Women Voters has accepted the Unite and Rise 8.5 challenge to mobilize and educate voters to defend our democracy because Women Defend Democracy. Taking this challenge means we will use the tools that have served us for decades. We will rally, march, testify, advocate, litigate, educate and make our voices heard. Your state League of Women Voters, supported by our local and national Leagues, will always work to defend the rights of voters to participate in free and fair elections. Working alongside other nonpartisan organizations, we are stronger together. We welcome Delta Sigma Theta's collaboration across South Carolina as we accept the challenge to keep democracy strong. We may not win every challenge, but we are committed to the fight. Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy remains our mission.

Following are examples of your state league of Women Voters at work. We welcome hearing from you and always welcome your support.

— Your Management Team:
Paula Egelson, Laurel Suggs,
Lynn Teague and Joan Zaleski

OUR STATE AND NATION AT A CROSSROADS: GERRYMANDERING AND THE VOICES OF VOTERS

Most League members are aware that the South Carolina Supreme Court has ruled against us in our effort to overturn the gerrymandered map of SC Congressional District (CD) 1. The Court unanimously ruled, "We hold partisan gerrymandering claims present a nonjusticiable political question in South Carolina, and we deny the League's claim for relief."

Chief Justice Kittredge, joined by Justice Hill, concurred in a separate opinion that is very interesting for its additional insights into their thinking. Kittredge wrote,

"We are seeing - and will continue to see - state legislatures race to further minimize and perhaps erase the representation of the state's minority political party in Congress. These results may, indeed, be in line with each respective state's constitution and laws, but they collectively have the effect of diminishing our constitutional republic as a whole. This is a troubling prospect for those who adhere to our nation's founding principle that the People are sovereign."

(There is a footnote to this statement praising the SC General Assembly for not eliminating CD 6 as a district ensuring minority representation. That district has been protected by the federal Voting Rights Act, not the goodwill of the General Assembly.)

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Highlights

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Gerrymandering and the Voices of the Voters

Continued from page 1

We agree that it is a very troubling prospect — in fact, our painful reality— that politicians are choosing their voters, not voters their political leaders. Kittredge concludes, “I point to the constitutional bedrock of this nation: the sovereign power of the people to shape legislative outcomes through advocacy and the ballot box, a principle more fully explained by Madison in The Federalist No. 10. Our judicial constraint today in no way muffles the People’s voice in shaping the laws that govern us.”

Sadly, this is not true. The voice of the People through advocacy and the ballot box is indeed muffled, even gagged, by the unconstrained gerrymandering permitted by both US and SC Supreme Courts. Gerrymandering creates massive hurdles to the ability of communities to elect candidates of their choosing. Legislators who have chosen themselves as the beneficiary of elections through biased maps then pass laws that please only their own most reliable supporters.

Kittredge tells us, “It remains conceivable that a future challenge may represent more fully developed constitutional violations with a discernable nexus to manageable judicial standards, thereby warranting judicial intervention.” However, the problem is not the current absence of sound measures of how redistricting principles are distorted in our legislative maps. It is not even the difficulty of establishing that the intent of map drawers has been

to make themselves and their parties certain winners in future elections. They have conceded that in sworn testimony in federal court. The problem is that courts have valued constitutional prerogatives given to legislators far above constitutional rights of voters when weighing the inevitable tension between those rights. Heads they win, tails we lose.

There is only one way that the people themselves can do what the courts refuse to do to end this theft of rights and power. The Judiciary will not save us. All voters must show up for all elections, both primary and general, in such numbers that the expectations of map drawers can be overcome. Every vote in every election is needed if there is to be any chance of recovering our voices. Voters must understand this. That is the work of the League of Women Voters, to educate, inform and motivate citizens to overcome apathy and work to recover their voices in how we are governed.

And yes, this is nonpartisan. Many legislators in both major parties have helped to pack their own districts with supporters, sending those in the opposing party to adjacent districts. We must encourage everyone to vote every time, without exception, so that elections — at least sometimes — in fact represent the voice of the People. There is a lot of work before us, but the League has met many challenges and can meet this one.

— Lynn S. Teague, LWVSC Vice President, Issues & Action

SAVE THE DATE!



League In Action Day (LEAD)

Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026

Columbia, SC

Details and registration to follow soon!

State Council

Saturday, June 20, 2026

Columbia, SC

LWVUS National Convention

June 25 – June 28

Columbus, Ohio



LWV Spartanburg's August General Meeting with speaker Emily Poole, SC Environmental Law Project.

THE LEAGUE AT WORK

GROWING OUR LEAGUE COMMUNITY

- 13** local Leagues in SC
- 2** member-at-large units
- 1,087** members (As of 10/17/2025: 1,199)

INCREASING VOTER ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

- 72,251** voters educated via VOTE411 in 2023 general election and 2024 primary cycles
- 23,288** people received voter registration assistance at 512 events with the help of 326 volunteers
- 177** candidate, issue, and education forums
- 1,732,823** people received information to actively participate in our democracy through voter and citizen education
- 112+** Poll Workers, Election Observers and Observer Corps Members

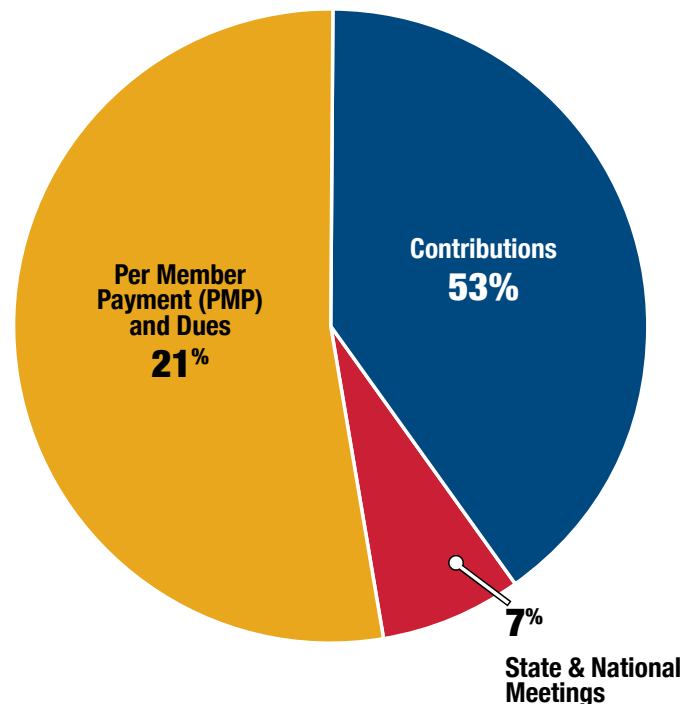
GROWING OUR ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM

- 35+** state partners
- 128+** local partners
- 26** oral and/or written testimonies at the State House
- 10** Action Alerts
- 14** Action Lists
- 150** activists attending monthly legislative updates
- 3** registered volunteer lobbyists

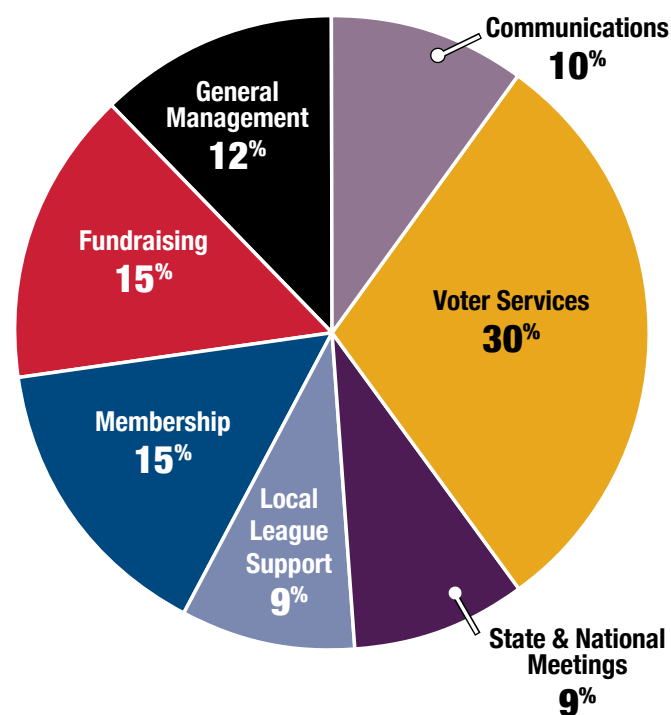
STRENGTHENING OUR OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

- \$63,868** raised; 42% increase over 2023-24
- 167** donors

FY25 Income



FY25 Expenses



ELECTORAL COLLEGE ABOLITION

In our communities, our state and our nation right now, there are many crises that demand our attention. Some of these crises are short-term, like addressing immediate threats to personal autonomy and freedom of speech. Some are longer-term issues, like making structural reforms to repair and defend our democratic system. Of these, one key reform is the abolition of the Electoral College.

The Electoral College, from its beginnings, has been undemocratic — part of its original purpose was to give slave states a distortedly large amount of power in US presidential elections — and the distortions continue.

Under the Electoral College system, each state gets a number of electors equal to their congressional delegation. For instance, South Carolina (with 2 US Senators and 7 US House Representatives), has 9 electors in the Electoral College. In total, there are 538 electors, and, because majority support is required, a candidate must receive at least 270 electoral votes to win.

The key problem with the Electoral College is that its results do not reflect the overall votes of the US population. There are two main reasons for this.

1. Because the minimum number of state electoral votes is 3, small-population states have a larger share of electoral votes than their share of the US population. For example, each of Wyoming's Electoral College votes represents around 200,000 people. That gives each of Wyoming's electoral votes the power of 3 electoral votes compared to South Carolina, where each electoral vote represents around 600,000 people. This distortion gives the smallest US states — which also tend to be more rural and whiter than average — a disproportionate impact on presidential elections.
2. Because almost all states use the “winner take all” system, giving all of their electoral votes to the winner of the state's popular vote, there is an enhanced risk that the Electoral College

winner will not be the winner of the US popular vote, especially in close elections. This has happened 5 times, most recently in 2000 and 2016. Because of the Electoral College system, there is a huge incentive for presidential candidates to focus on the “swing states” (and the issues and concerns that they care about) where the outcome is up for grabs. “Safe states” like South Carolina are ignored. The

person, one vote.” For decades, the League of Women Voters has supported election of the US President by direct popular vote. More recently, the League declared the abolition of the Electoral College to be a high-priority, long-range goal.

A key initial step towards the goal is spreading the word about the importance of this issue and there's a part for you to play! You can sign up at lww.org/opov to receive LWVUS messages, message the

For decades, the League of Women Voters has supported election of the US President by direct popular vote. More recently, the League declared the abolition of the Electoral College to be a high-priority, long-range goal.

Electoral College system also gives people in safe states a reason not to vote. If the outcome is a given, why bother? And turnout in safe states does, in fact, tend to be lower than in swing states.

All of this runs afoul of the League's core commitment to the value of “one

[nationwide committee](mailto:abolishelectoral@gmail.com) (abolishelectoral@gmail.com) to get on their distribution list, and reach out to me for more resources and info. Together, we can make this happen!

— Lawson Wetli, LWVSC Director,
State & National Programs

Making Democracy Work Grant

Joan Zaleski, LWVSC Vice President, Voter Services, applied for and received a Making Democracy Work grant of \$5000 from the LWV Education Fund. This allows the League to provide digital billboards around the State before the June 9, 2026, Primary elections. The grant promotes the League's Unite and Rise 8.5 challenge to engage voters in getting out the vote. Messaging will include both checking your registration and voting early and recognizes the critical importance of voting in primary elections.

Please contact Cherie Walker (cherie.walker.lww@gmail.com) to share your local photographs and events for inclusion on social media, action lists, website and eblasts.

Membership Memo

At around 1,200 members across 16 Leagues, including those members of our Members-at-Large (MAL) Leagues for members without a League in their local area, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina is growing and thriving. It is an exciting time to be a member.

In my first months serving at the state level in the position of Director of Member Services, I have enjoyed learning about South Carolina's local Leagues. One observation stands out for me: it is not necessarily the number of members in a League that makes a League strong. Instead, it is the commitment of the members to achieving their goals and serving its community.

I come to state-level work having served as Director of Voter Participation and more recently as President of LWV of the Columbia Area, one of the larger Leagues in the state. Having experienced the rewards and challenges of participation in a large League, I strive

to learn more about our mid-size and smaller Leagues. I have already learned a great deal about how Leagues of all sizes find innovative ways to recruit, engage and retain members.

I joined the League in 2021 when I retired after thirty years as a Professor of English at Columbia College, so I am a relatively recent member in a local League of long standing, a League that has members who have been active for decades. This is another element of the diversity of our local Leagues across the state. We have newly-formed Leagues and long-established Leagues, and those Leagues have different needs. It can be challenging to get new Leagues off the ground, but it can also be challenging for older Leagues to maintain their momentum.

Here's another fact about our local Leagues: whether large or small, new or old, all Leagues experience peaks and valleys. Valued leaders move away

or lose interest, financial resources diminish, conflicts emerge among members, technology challenges overwhelm, or members lose sight of the LWV focus on "Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy." Whatever the case may be, Leagues can seek assistance from LWVSC leadership. State leaders can help you think through solutions to problems and provide you with support. Go to LWVSC.org and find Our Team under About Us for information about your state leaders.

I look forward to working with your League as you serve your members and achieve League goals through an active and engaged membership. Please reach out to me to let me know how I can help and to share with me any good ideas you have for membership development so that I can share them with other League leaders.

— Christine Hait,
LWVSC Director, Member Services

Rally for Reproductive Rights



Pat Forbis, Eve Stacey and Cynthia Flynn.



A group of protesters.



Lynn Teague, Betty Gregory and Sharon Ayling.



Sara Phillips, right, and a friend.



Protesters hold signs on the steps of the State House.

Working groups have been part of the structure of the LWVSC since the 2019 convention. Working groups focus on a particular area or topic that aligns with the State League's stated positions. Education is the primary purpose of these groups. The Healthcare Policy Working group, chaired by Healthcare Advocacy Specialist, Teresa Arnold, focuses on State priorities such as access to quality and affordable healthcare, infant and maternal mortality rates, reproductive health, Medicaid expansion and the decline in vaccinations, especially among children.

Connect with Working Groups at LWVSC.org.

Welcome, Shelby Cohen, LWVSC Social Media Manager

Shelby Cohen is a communications strategist and designer with more than a decade of experience helping mission-driven organizations tell their stories with clarity and impact. Her background includes leadership roles in nonprofit communications and community outreach and she holds a Master's degree in Global Sustainability from the University of South Florida.

A former board member of the League of Women Voters of Greenville County, Shelby has co-created several community initiatives, including the Greenville Community Budget Teach-In and the Greenville County Seed Library.

Since August 2025, Shelby has supported the League of Women Voters of South Carolina's communications efforts, managing Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Her posts and graphics are accessible for local League use through the LWVSC CANVA account.



LWVSC HEALTHCARE POLICY WORKING GROUP UPDATE

With increasing concern about public health cuts in South Carolina and a decrease in childhood immunizations, the LWVSC Healthcare Policy Working Group along with LWV Charleston Area's Healthcare Work Group sponsored an informational webinar on August 6, 2025.

The featured speakers were Dr. Kathleen Cartmell, Chairperson of the South Carolina Immunization Coalition; Wanda Crotwell, healthcare lobbyist; and Scott Thorpe, Executive Director, Southern Alliance for Public Health. They spoke to the need for quality healthcare in SC, a fully-funded SC Public Health Department and having children in the state immunized. In addition, there was an emphasis on reaching individuals in rural areas where adequate healthcare is lacking.

More webinars will follow related to statewide public health topics. For information, contact Teresa Arnold, the LWVSC healthcare lobbyist or Paula Egelson, LWVCA/LWVSC.

What HR1 (OBBA) and Tax Credit Expiration Mean for South Carolina

House Resolution 1 in the 119th Congress (also known as One Big Beautiful Bill) and the Tax Credit Expiration will have a noticeable impact in South Carolina. Medicaid expansion is a top priority for the Healthcare Policy Working Group and is part of a statewide coalition of organizations (CoverSC) working to pass legislation that will expand Medicaid to uninsured South Carolinians.

Over the past four years, the number of working age uninsured in South Carolina has dropped to historic lows thanks to enhanced federal tax credits that helped families afford private insurance on the exchange. Those tax credits will expire in 2025 and, along with other HR1 exchange provisions, threaten to reverse that

progress and create ripple effects for our working residents, hospitals and taxpayers.

What's Changing and Why It Matters

Exchange enrollment has tripled from just over 200,000 in 2022 to 632,000 in 2025, driven by subsidies that made private insurance affordable to working families, especially those earning less than 150% of the poverty level. (One person: \$23,475; Family of three: \$39,975) If those subsidies expire, and with other exchange provisions, over 170,000 South Carolinians are projected to lose coverage. (Kaiser Family Foundation, August 2025)

*... the League will
continue to advocate for
greater access to health
care for our neighbors
and fellow South
Carolinians.*

For the lowest-income families, premiums could increase more than 500%, effectively pricing them out of the market. (Kaiser Family Foundation, July 2024)

These are NOT people gaming the system. They're people you go to church with, your child's preschool teacher, a neighbor caring for an aging parent or the college student at your local grocery store. They're working — but in jobs that don't offer insurance.

Medicaid expansion would help many of these folks retain their health coverage. That's why the League will continue to advocate for greater access to health care for our neighbors and fellow South Carolinians.

— Teresa Arnold, Paula Egelson
and Jean LePere

WE APPRECIATE OUR DONORS

We couldn't do it without you! The LWVSC is grateful to each and every one of our donors. Your financial support helped advance our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy. Please know your gifts fueled our ability to inform voters about issues and candidates and strengthened our advocacy efforts. Together we've made a difference in South Carolina. THANK YOU!

Sarah Leverette (\$1000+)

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Help Defend Democracy

There are so many ways to support the LWVSC. Make a gift in a way that is meaningful to you.

Become a Monthly Donor

Our democracy needs defending every single day. Your monthly recurring donation will provide ongoing support to oppose threats to our democracy.

Bequests

The bequest is the most common form of planned giving. With a bequest, you may make provision in your will, designating either a dollar amount or a percentage of your estate to the LWVSC. Bequests should be prepared and executed with your attorney's assistance.

Gifts of IRAs

A qualified charitable distribution (QCD) is a wonderful option for people 70 ½ and older. That's because it allows you to make a gift — from \$100 to \$105,000 — without the distribution counting as taxable income.

This giving option is a direct contribution made from your traditional or Roth IRA to the LWVSC and is a great option if you don't normally itemize your charitable deductions.

Employee Matching Gifts

Many employers will match employee donations to eligible nonprofit organizations. It's an easy way to double your contribution to us. Contact your employer's HR or community giving department to find out if they have a matching gift program.

Stephanie Wood, former LWVSC Board member and Johnson & Johnson retiree, understands the value of doubling her dollars to advance our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy: "My contribution to the LWVSC is doubled by my former employer. The process is so easy. I just complete the matching gift application and mail it with my personal contribution."

For further information or questions, please contact Hannah E. Parker, LWVSC Director, Development.

This list reflects donations received between 7/1/24 and 6/30/25. Any received after 6/30/25 will be included in the 2025-2026 edition of this publication.



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SC VOTER

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Established in 1920, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina is a nonpartisan, political organization that encourages people to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. League membership is open to any person who subscribes to the purposes and policy of the League. All members receive the SC Voter, email communications and news from their local League.

Prefer a digital newsletter only? Email us.

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THANK YOU FOR FUELING THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

To our Members and Donors:

Your commitment powers our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy. Because of you, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina continues to educate, advocate and protect the rights of every voter across our state—we are deeply grateful.

This year, the LWVSC State Board is leading by example: 100% of our LWVSC Board members have pledged to donate for the new fiscal year. Our commitment reflects the urgency of our mission and the strength of our collective resolve. As we face new challenges and opportunities, your support remains essential and we invite you to join us.

Whether you are renewing your gift or increasing your support, every dollar helps us meet the moment—and move democracy forward. Make your online donation today. Together, we can expand access, amplify voices and ensure every vote counts.

Let's keep the fight alive. Let's keep moving forward. Let's keep voters empowered. Let's keep democracy strong.



Donate online: lwvsc.org

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