

## BUT I MIGHT BE PRIMARIED!

**R**ecently during a Zoom meeting someone asked, “What is ‘being primaried?’” It is a good question because it is the key to understanding much of our politics. We can use it in some sentences that might be heard around the South Carolina State House if our legislators were truly honest:

*“I know this bill preventing trans kids from getting medical care is likely to destroy lives and even lead some children to commit suicide, but if I don’t vote for it, I might be primaried.”*

*“I know dead people aren’t voting and this bill would lead to chaos in voter roll*

***To a South Carolina politician, being primaried is a terrible threat.***

*management, but if I don’t support it, I might be primaried.”*

*“I know these exceptions to abortion bans are pretty much useless and will even lead to deaths but if I don’t vote for this bill, I might be primaried.”*

Let’s examine why this threat is so powerful.

“Being primaried” means that someone files to run against an incumbent in a primary election. To a naïve bystander this might sound like ordinary politics. To a South Carolina politician it is a terrible threat.

In most statewide elections in South Carolina the Republican primary has become the election that usually decides who will win in November. Legislative elections, both for the General Assembly

and Congress, are also seldom competitive in November. Sometimes this is because some parts of our state skew so heavily toward one major party that bias is almost inevitable. However, in many cases districts are designed to predetermine November election outcomes: they are gerrymandered to protect either the incumbent or the majority party or both. For example, in the current S.C. House of Representatives map, out of 124 seats only 8 are now considered truly competitive.

In practice, this means that those who vote in primaries have greatly exaggerated power to influence our politics.

### So, who votes in primaries?

It is hoped that the dedicated members of the League of Women Voters vote

in every election. However, there aren’t many of us. Sadly, the most extreme and angriest members of our society are very likely to vote in primaries and with habitually poor turnout for these elections, they get to determine election outcomes. And so, our politicians do what their primary voters want.

### What does that look like?

The 2024 General Assembly session began on the first day with a bill to prohibit medical care to persons under 18 with gender dysphoria, i.e. “trans” children. Despite opposition from every respected medical association and opposition from 47 of the 48 people who testified, H.4624 sailed through the House. It has been referred to Senate Medical Affairs, where it will likely receive a positive reception.

Also in the first weeks, the House Constitutional Laws Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee has heard a series of election bills. A few were simple fixes and have been forwarded to the full committee with a favorable recommendation. One excellent bill, H.4022, Instant Runoff Voting, has not yet received a vote. Fortunately, the other bills on the agenda, heavily grounded in election disinformation, also did not yet get a vote. H.4259, H.4560, and H.4261 would require full hand recounts of ballots on demand, would transfer voter roll maintenance to the counties, would repeal no-excuse early voting, and would make other changes that are not needed and would be catastrophic for county election offices and for voters. The chair

*Continued on page 3*

## Highlights

- President’s Message..... 2*
- Gendered Pay Inequity and the Nobel Prize..... 3*
- AI Impact on Elections..... 3*
- Power the South..... 4*
- Remembering Dr. Turner ..... 5*
- Vote 411 Campaign ..... 6*
- Welcome Courtney Thomas... 6*
- Constitutional Offices Study.. 7*
- Around the State..... 7*
- Save the Date!..... 7*

## Two Thousand Twenty-Four

When I was in high school, I read *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell's dystopian novel and cautionary tale about the dangers of totalitarianism and the manipulation of truth. As the year 1984 loomed, some people viewed its onset with trepidation but were comforted when the year proved to be just a normal one. Other years stand out in our national memory: 2000, which was predicted to be apocalyptic but wasn't, and 2001, which unmoored us from our sense of collective safety. Since the assault on our nation's capitol on January 6, 2021, many have dreaded the arrival of 2024 and a presidential election whose determination has the potential to change the course of American democracy.

Now 2024 is here. With demonstrable threats to democracy and democratic institutions apparent in the language and behavior of some candidates, how does the League of Women Voters maintain its nonpartisanship while defending democracy?

As LWV's late President Deborah Turner often noted, LWV shines a bright light in a sometimes dark world. Rather than fearing the outcome of an election and crossing into partisanship, we need to loudly reaffirm the things we value, which are not partisan values, but deeply rooted American values.

Born in the crucible of the women's suffragist movement, the League has long stood for the right of all people to be represented in our democracy. Although some of our predecessors were reluctant to ally their cause with that of Black women, the League today defends voting and civil rights for all. Only when all our voices are respected and heard does our democratic government embody the will of the people.

When we see attempts by our legislators to suppress the will of the people through gerrymandering, undue influence in the selection of judges, and enactment of laws which limit access to the polls or which are out of step with the opinions of a majority of citizens, the League will continue to call out these actions and press for change.

When we see and hear candidates for office speaking coarsely and disparagingly of their opponents and perceived "enemies," we must continue to model civility and respect for different perspectives.

When candidates refuse to participate in VOTE411 or our candidate forums, we must let it be known that their refusal is a loss for democracy and for voters' rights to be informed about candidates and the positions they support.

When misinformation is planted in social media and elsewhere, we must be vigilant and prepared to counter it with facts. Because we are nonpartisan, the League will continue to be relied upon as a trusted source of information, based on study and free from bias.

As students of government, we know that democracy protects our individual liberties within a constitutional framework that provides checks and balances among the three branches of government. Everyone is protected by the law, but no one is above it.

Although H. Rap Brown famously said that "violence is as American as cherry pie," we eschew violence, but support and will protect our fundamental right to peaceful protest.

We will also serve on the front lines of the upcoming elections, encouraging people to volunteer as poll workers, monitoring elections to ensure they are free and fair, and reminding people that

### PRIMARIED

*Continued from page 1*

has promised more hearings on these bills. They are not dead.

Meanwhile, hearings are being held on badly needed judicial selection reform in both the House and Senate. Legislative power over the judicial branch seriously threatens the independent checks and balances on which our form of government is founded. However, current recommendations to the Speaker of the House do not include removing legislators from the powerful Judicial Merit Selection



voting is not only a hard-won right but also an obligation of citizenship.

At our recent Power the South event, South Carolina League leaders were called upon to flex our collective power by engaging youth, partnering with other organizations, reaching out to friends and friends of friends, showing up at local government and board meetings, and—when our rights are threatened—litigating to protect them.

In 2024, the message of Orwell's novel has new resonance. Preserving and protecting democracy is hard work. The voice and work of the League of Women Voters, which recently observed 104 years of empowering voters and defending democracy, are more important than ever.

— Nancy Williams, LWVSC President

Commission (JMISC), a crucial reform. The Senate is about to begin deliberations in a subcommittee of Judiciary; there is likely to be significant opposition to change there as well.

League testimony on all of these subjects is available at our website, [www.lwvsc.org](http://www.lwvsc.org). Please read it. **And please vote in every election—especially the primaries!**

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

## GENDERED PAY INEQUITY AND THE NOBEL PRIZE

The 2023 Nobel Prize in Economics was awarded to women's labor scholar Dr. Claudia Goldin of Harvard University. Her scholarship is relevant to South Carolina's gendered economic phenomena.

Central to women's economic development, Dr. Goldin finds, are safe reproductive choices. She examines women's entire labor experiences, in workplaces and domestically. As a woman in a male-dominated field, she documents the impact of gendered social norms on people's economic prospects. By recognizing Dr. Goldin's scholarship, the Nobel Committee honored gender research as central, rather than niche or peripheral, to economics.

Dr. Goldin's work highlights several gains for women. Women's age at first marriage increased, enabling training and educational investments in themselves. Those options are predicated on the availability of safe and accessible birth control. The birth control pill, coupled with the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision, was foundational to these economic opportunities.

In South Carolina access to legal abortion is limited or unavailable. The inability to choose when to begin a family is harmful as the gender pay gap is minimal before a woman has children. South Carolina women experience some of the highest rates of gender pay inequality nationally. The gap is demonstrated by the fact that, depending on race, a South Carolina woman would need to work an additional 12-34 years to catch up to the typical pay of a white man.

Furthermore, a Black woman is paid 57.5 cents to every dollar that a white man is paid. There is also gaping wealth inequity. In South Carolina, women own just 21 cents for every dollar that men own. This gap is even greater for women of color who own 4.5 cents for every dollar that white men own.

Many societal factors impact gender pay gaps including unaffordable and unreliable

day care, sticky floors (little upward job mobility), glass ceilings (barriers to women rising too high), race discrimination, and job norms including inflexible schedules. Dr. Goldin emphasizes that women did not choose careers unwisely, thus making less money; they did not have less education or skills for their jobs; and they did not work less, have less ambition or commitment to their careers. Rather, it was the birth of their first child which set women (with rare exceptions) on a path of increasing gendered pay inequity for their entire working lives.

For male workers, the birth of a child results in a "fatherhood premium." Working fathers are perceived as more competent than working mothers or childless men. Fathers make more money than childless men and, it goes without saying, more than working mothers.

Gender inequality also stems from what Dr. Goldin calls "greedy jobs." The highest paid jobs in some fields are held by workers (usually male) who work long hours, travel extensively, and prioritize their careers. They also often have a woman at home raising their children and enabling them to survive grueling work requirements. Dr. Goldin asserts that both men and women lose as "men forgo time with their family and women often forgo their career." (Inman, 2023).

Economic hardship in South Carolina is acute and will be exacerbated by lack of access to safe and legal reproductive choices. Women's economic wellbeing is built on the bedrock of delaying marriage, agency over their reproductive lives, educational and job training, and flexibility by employers to incorporate the reality of women's lives into their workplaces. Dr. Goldin's research, honored with a Nobel Prize, provides a roadmap for changes needed in South Carolina if women's economic well-being is to be fully realized.

— Laura R. Woliver, Layne Rosati and Tia Myers, LWVSC Gender and Women's Equity Working Group

### AI Impacts on Elections

The fields of artificial intelligence (AI), data science, and analytics have advanced with stunning rapidity over the last decade or so. Among the most striking of the advances has been the appearance of software and service products involving so-called large language models in artificial intelligence. The most widely known of these and the first to receive significant public attention is ChatGPT, a product of the company OpenAI. But AI now powers or will soon power most online search engines. AI is also rapidly making inroads into all aspects of science and technology. A critical issue for American society is the impact that these developments are having and will have on elections.

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina is teaming up with a group of researchers headed by Biplav Srivastava, Ph.D., a professor of computer science and engineering at the University of South Carolina and a member of the University's Artificial Intelligence Institute. To start the collaboration off, I will be participating on behalf of the League at the third Workshop on AI for Credible Elections, part of the annual conference of the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence in Vancouver at the end of February. Activities at the workshop include panels on "AI non-use for elections," "AI use for elections," and "AI enablement for elections," as well as research presentations on deep fakes, fake news detection, crowdsourced election monitoring, and other topics.

The League is also working to put together a panel discussion for the public in Columbia during the spring and one for the League's Council meeting in May. This will be an ongoing topic of interest for League members throughout the 2024 election season and beyond, as the technology continues to develop.

— Matthew Saltzman, LWVSC Director for Election Systems and Technology



# POWER THE SOUTH: BUILDING PEOPLE POWER IN SOUTH CAROLINA



National, state, and local attendees and presenters gather for a group photo.

The League of Women Voters (LWVUS)'s Power the South tour of eight southern states made a stop in Columbia in late October, providing two days of inspirational leadership and training to 45 League members from around the state.

Leading the LWVUS delegation was President Dr. Deborah Turner, who was accompanied by Chief of Programs Alma Couverthie, Mission Impact Senior Director Jeanette Senecal, and four other staff members.

League members participated in four training sessions centered around the theme of building people power as an antidote to rising threats to democracy. Couverthie led a discussion of systemic threats to democracy and opportunities to create "a bulwark of democracy" by building a broad base of relationships. Digital Relations Manager Luana Chaires illustrated the power of relational organizing using League in Action (LIA) to connect with one's personal network. Senecal shared some practical tools and resources for countering mis- and disinformation; Attorney Caren Short shared ways LWVUS' litigation team works to protect voters' rights.

Other highlights of the event were two panel presentations with guests and partners. LWVUS Regional Organizer Nile Blass, Hamilton Brooks of Generation Vote, and USC student Emma Pedersen offered suggestions for engaging youth in our movement. In an example of how local Leagues are flexing their power in their communities, ACLU lobbyist Josh Malkin and League members Paula Egelson and Reba Kruse identified the threats book bans pose to democracy and how local Leagues

are countering them. Kruse told of how she withstood personal threats to defend the freedom to read at public meetings.

As the event came to an end, President Nancy Williams took up the litany introduced by Couverthie at the outset and Leaguers left chanting, "When I say 'people,' you say 'power!'" According to Williams, the event was a success, as attendees returned home, energized with plans to build their collective power in their communities.



Words most frequently captured in a closing exercise.



Alma Couverthie facilitates a local League SWOT analysis.



Luana Chaires tells how to magnify our voices using League in Action (Outreach Circle)



Catherine Forester, Barbara Nash, Joan Zaleski, Dr. Turner, and Lynn Teague take time off for fun!



Nile Blass, Hamilton Brooks, and Emma Pedersen offer ideas for engaging youth.



Joan Zaleski adds her welcome and leads guests an ice breaker.



Dr. Turner and Nancy Williams close the meeting with charges for the future.



## Remembering Dr. Deborah Turner

On January 28, three months to the day after she visited South Carolina, the League of Women Voters lost one of our strongest voices for empowering voters and defending democracy. Dr. Deborah Turner—or Dr. T, as her colleagues affectionately called her—presided with grace over our 2022 national convention in Denver when delegates learned that Roe v. Wade had been overturned and joined our march to the state capitol to protest this injustice. She also joined protesters in Washington D.C. to demand voting rights legislation.

With her husband accompanying her, Dr. T drove state to state to meet with League members, listening to them as well as inspiring them with her words. Her typical, unassuming attire was an LWV t-shirt, which she often paired with a white suffragist suit. No matter the challenge, she urged us to "keep on keepin' on," words that we will long remember.

All of us who spent any time with her know what a courageous, inspirational leader and a gracious, humble human being she was. We are all the poorer for her passing but the richer for having met and served with her.

—Nancy Williams, LWVSC President



# DIGITAL VOTE411 ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

As our state League makes plans for promoting the use of VOTE411 for the 2024 elections, we look back at what we've learned from the successful campaign just completed in November 2023. With the help of a Making Democracy Work grant from the League of Women Voters (LWV) Education Fund, we created several VOTE411 digital ads that began airing in August and ran up to Election Day 2023.

These ads targeted a very specific demographic of unregistered young African American women between the ages of 18 and 50 in the Charleston, Columbia, and Greenville areas of the state. The campaign was two-fold: 1) to encourage them to register to vote, and 2) to check their polling place and their ballot.

The results of this digital advertising campaign, as shared by contractor LOCALIQ and LWV, were impressive. More than 1,000,000 ads were delivered; more than 6,000 users clicked onto the VOTE411 site; and more than 1,000 new visitors used the VOTE411 site over the 2023 municipal election cycle. We were able to reach a very large demographic that would not have been possible in any other way. Critical to our success were LWV VOTE411 Senior Manager

Megan Brown, who brought enthusiasm and Google Analytics to the project, and Laura Haight, Communications Director of LWV of Greenville County, who added her experience and expertise to this campaign.

As we approach statewide elections in 2024, we anticipate enlarging the scope of a digital campaign beyond unregistered African American young women and using other marketing strategies. With LWV's assistance, we should be able to obtain additional analytics to evaluate our work. We also see possibilities for attracting new members and additional donors as well as newly engaged voters.

Digital campaigns of this kind are expensive. LWVSC supplemented a \$5000 grant from LWV with \$5000 of its money to fund the project. Although we felt that the cost per ad was worth the \$10,000



The Fall 2023 LWVSC digital ads addressed four different themes, resulting in more than 1000 new VOTE411 users.

investment, planning for a larger campaign for the 2024 elections will require a larger fundraising campaign than in previous years. Anyone interested in making a donation of \$1000 or more dedicated to this project should contact Nancy Williams at [president.lwvsc@gmail.com](mailto:president.lwvsc@gmail.com)

—Joan Zaleski, Vice President, Voter Service



## Meet Courtney Thomas, Our Social Media Consultant

Courtney Thomas is a communications specialist with a focus in nonprofits, advocacy, and political communications. Her work centers on accessibility, gender justice, and reproductive rights. With her assistance, we'll engage new people with the League via social media and provide them with important information about statewide news, voting, and civic engagement.

Every like, share, repost, and comment makes it easier for people outside of our network to learn more about our work.

Have you followed the League of Women Voters of South Carolina (LWVSC) on social media? Follow us on Instagram ([lwvsouthcarolina](https://www.instagram.com/lwvsouthcarolina)) and Facebook (League of Women Voters of South Carolina) for the latest League news!



## An Adventure in Democracy: Constitutional Offices Study

Maybe you didn't know that there are six members of South Carolina's executive leadership in addition to the governor and lieutenant governor that are designated in the state constitution to be elected by the voters. Or maybe you did, as you stared at the ballot and tried to decide who among these unfamiliar names should be secretary of state.

Which of these officers are elected rather than appointed varies from state to state. Just 10 years ago, the South Carolina Constitution was amended to change the adjutant general position from elected to appointed. You may remember voting for or against changing the superintendent of education from elected to appointed in November 2018. (It failed.) And there are efforts underway to change both the comptroller general and the commissioner of agriculture from elected to appointed.

At its 2023 state convention, the League agreed to do a study and reevaluate its position—not just whether to elect or appoint, but why. Since July, a statewide committee has been hard at work preparing “study kits” to help local Leagues guide this conversation and report back to the state board about what method of selection (election or appointment) the LWVSC should support, if any. These study kits will be distributed in March as soon as the LWVSC board has reviewed and approved the consensus questions that will guide our conversations.

All of our many positions in our *Program and Action Agenda* were arrived at through this kind of study process. They form the basis for what we act on and advocate for. The League doesn't just advocate for grassroots democracy – we practice it within our own organization. So gear up! An adventure in practicing democracy is coming your way in your local League.

## Around the State



**LWV Spartanburg registers new citizens**  
At the invitation of Honorable Judge Coggins, Jr., LWV Spartanburg participated in the October 18 Naturalization Ceremony in Spartanburg. The League registered new US citizens to vote—always a thrill for them and League volunteers too.

**LWV Greenville receives NAACP award**  
The LWV Greenville County was selected to receive the NAACP Greenville Branch Partnership Award for 2023. Susan Bell accepted the award on behalf of all volunteers, especially those who register voters and work to get out the vote.

Other League members were recognized for their work for the NAACP with the President's Unsung Hero Award. Recipients were Kate Franch, Lawson Wetli and Hannah E. Parker, a member of the LWVSC board.

**Democracy Days food truck partnership whets appetites to vote early**  
Thanks to an innovative partnership between LWV Columbia Area and local food truck partners, early voters in the December SC Senate District 19 Special Election were eligible for a Democracy Days discount. The requirement? An “I Voted” sticker and an appetite!

**Book Banning In South Carolina – the fight continues**  
LWV Hilton Head Island-Bluffton hosted student leaders from the Diversity Awareness Youth Literacy Organization (DAYLO). A student-founded organization at Beaufort High School and now recognized nationally, DAYLO uses a book club model to celebrate diverse viewpoints and to learn and teach themes of social justice and inclusivity.

**Quality local news increases voter participation**  
Did you know that access to quality local news tends to drive higher voter participation? Ever wonder how reporters decide what's worth covering? LWV Charleston Area hosted a January 18 community talk and Q&A about local news coverage with Autumn Phillips, editor in chief of *The Post and Courier*.



Representatives from our 13 local Leagues and two Member-at-Large Units will convene for the biennial LWVSC Council meeting on May 4 at the Midlands Technical College Beltline Campus in Columbia. All League members are welcome, but registration will be capped at 96 with space reserved for representatives from each League and the LWVSC Board. The agenda for this day-long event will include presentations and workshops designed to continue to build our collective power. More information will be forthcoming. In the meantime, save the date!



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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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# INVEST IN DEMOCRACY

The 2024 election year has begun and LWVSC, your state League, needs to ignite the power of the people of South Carolina to protect democracy at both the state and national levels. Our values are under attack and democracy itself is on the line.

As a trusted provider of election information, the League is putting our nonpartisan advocacy and education efforts into high gear. And we do that best with your help.

Every gift benefits our statewide work. Donate today!



Donate online:  
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