

SC WOMEN AND THE LEGISLATURE

As we get ready to commemorate the 47th anniversary of UN recognition of International Women's Day on March 8, the state's women are in for some rough roads ahead.

Many bills we support will likely die of benign neglect, while an array of anti-woman legislation will rise above obstacles like factual errors, misinformation, and just plain "awfulness" to become law, according to Lynn Teague, the advocate/lobbyist for the state League.

There are no fewer than 11 different bills addressing some aspect of women's reproductive health. While many of those bills have little chance of passage, what is introduced is always important as a window into the souls of our elected officials. And in SC, it's pretty scary in there.

S.988 defines a person as a fertilized egg. If approved, "a whole lot of contraception would be illegal and in vitro fertilization would be illegal." Potentially the bill could lead to criminalizing miscarriage. Lynn, who has testified against this bill, says "doctors are testifying that this would make them unwilling to perform IVF. It's just too risky."

S.988 is just one in a smorgasbord of bills that are part of a "back to 1950 movement at the State House." "We have a part of the population that does not want to live in the 21st century, that strongly prefers the racial and gender relationships that prevailed in 1950 over those that prevail today," she explains.

Despite that inclination, Lynn believes there is not an appetite in the State Senate for a personhood bill.

Also on the table is S.907, a bill that requires doctors and prescribers to give patients who request the "medication

abortion," a two-pill regimen taken over two days, false information about the ability to reverse the impact of the initial dose.

"The state should not be in the business of telling doctors to give their patients false information," Lynn states, noting that "there is no peer-reviewed, systematic-controlled study to show that you can reverse a medical abortion after taking the first pills." This bill's future is uncertain.

Affirmative legislation, like H.3175 that would permit pharmacists to prescribe birth control, making it more accessible to many women across the state; and H.3747/S.574 which would remove the sales tax from menstrual products, are languishing.

Overall, Lynn sees this year's crop of reproductive health bills as clearly illustrating their "preference that women not have choices in general. That's where all this is coming from."

Lynn sees little likelihood that H.3183, H.3188 or S.514 - all pay equity bills - will pass this session. Some of these bills, including H.3183 and S.514, have attracted bipartisan sponsorship, which should have encouraged their passage. However, they have stalled. "Some in the State House deify business," she says, while at the same time "don't believe women should actually be working."

Bills to provide sick leave (H.3469), and paid family leave for state employees (H.3560 and S.11) do not appear to be moving rapidly toward passage, according to Lynn.

What is thriving in South Carolina and the rest of the Southern or Conservative states is the idea of a federal Constitutional Convention (H.3205, S.33) to restrain federal authority in the states.

"There are two continuing themes in South Carolina's history," Lynn notes, "one is race and the other is (complaining) about .. government..."

Lynn has testified several times against these bills focusing on strong Constitutional arguments. But more viscerally, she insists, "this is too big a risk."

"We don't want to throw a lit match into a pile of gasoline-soaked rags that is our national politics right now."

There are affirmative bills like Medicaid Expansion, a bill to end the practice of paying below minimum wage to persons with disabilities, and legislation to study disparities in Black maternal health, which the League supports through its partnership with WREN. "I feel bad that I spend so much of my time fighting against the bad ones that I don't have enough time to fight for the good ones," she concludes. Full article at bit.ly/LWVSC-IWD-state-bills

— Laura Haight,
LWV of Greenville County

Highlights

<i>President's Message</i>	2
<i>Defending Democracy</i>	3
<i>SC Nuclear Plans</i>	3
<i>Leagues in Action!</i>	4
<i>Empowering Voters</i>	4
<i>The League as Advocate</i>	6
<i>Bequests and Memorium</i>	7
<i>Donate to the League</i>	8

Can It Happen Here? Countering Threats to Democracy

It Can't Happen Here is the 1935 dark political novel by Nobelist Sinclair Lewis that depicts how fascism can take hold in America. For many years we have been lulled into thinking nothing of that sort could happen here. Yet as Harvard professors Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt in their 2018 book *How Democracies Die* point out, democracies don't necessarily die as the result of an external attack or a violent coup, but through the erosion of democratic norms. Evidence is accumulating that an anti-democratic movement is afoot in our country:

- State legislatures in 41 states, citing the ruse of "election integrity," have introduced 262 pieces of legislation to alter how states administer elections.
- The mainstream media has been attacked as the purveyor of "fake news" while social media and partisan cable stations promulgate "alternative facts."
- A polarized US Senate has failed to pass federal election reform and voting rights legislation that would guarantee "one person, one vote" regardless of a voter's residence.
- States are approving partisan gerrymandered political maps that will ensure that the party in power will remain so for at least the next ten years.
- The 45th President of the United States convinced his base that the presidential election was stolen because he lost the election.
- Thousands of his supporters stormed the US capitol with the aim of overturning a free and fair election.
- At least 163 people who have embraced the false claims of a stolen election are running for state elections positions in 2022.

- At least five people on the ground during the January 6 attack are running for the US House.
- Some state legislatures are stripping power from election officials, giving themselves the power to override the choice of the voters.

As journalist Barton Gellman warned in the December issue of *The Atlantic*, it is very likely that the loser of the 2024 presidential election may be proclaimed the winner.

At this time of serious threats to our democracy, the League of Women Voters has a critically important role to play. In keeping with the LWVUS Women Power Democracy campaign, we need to:

- Expand the franchise by ramping up our voter registration efforts, particularly in underrepresented areas.
- Ramp up our voter education and Get Out the Vote programs, for both the primaries and the general election, so voters will have confidence that their votes will count and that they matter.
- Actively promote VOTE411 as the "go-to" place for election information.
- Counter misinformation and disinformation and model civility and nonpartisanship in our candidate and issue forums.
- Keep a vigilant eye on proposed national and state legislation pertaining to elections and voting and mobilize voters to lobby their elected officials.
- Continue to support and mobilize for People-Powered Fair Maps.
- Promote our members' applying for positions on county and state election boards, monitor local and county political bodies through



Observer Corps groups, and enlarge our membership and partnerships, thereby increasing our clout. Much of this work occurs on the ground by local Leagues. However, as individuals we have important roles to play. We need to open and act on LWVSC and LWVUS advocacy alerts and share them with our circle of friends. As constituents, we need to call or write our elected officials and bring issues into local prominence by writing letters to the editor. We can't afford to leave this important work to a few.

According to Gellman in *The Atlantic*, "This is...a democratic emergency, and...without very strong and systematic pushback from protectors of democracy, we're going to lose something that we can't afford to lose..."

As a protector of democracy, the League of Women Voters needs to be at the forefront — with all Leagues and all members on deck — in confronting this emergency.

—Nancy Williams, LWVSC President

Follow us!

Facebook: League of Women Voters of South Carolina
Twitter: LWV of SC
Website: lwwsc.org

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY



Partners in voting rights advocacy, including LWVSC, gathered on the steps of the SC State House, Columbia.



LWV Charleston Area's January 6 march drew attention — and a crowd — of League supporters.



Nancy Williams, Sandy Stern, and other LWV Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Area members made their feelings clear on January 6.

LWVSC Opposes SC Nuclear Plans

The League of Women Voters of Horry County (LWVHC) asked that the League of Women Voters of South Carolina (LWVSC) oppose Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) relicensing of the Columbia Fuel Fabrication Facility (CFFF) operated by The Westinghouse Electric Company (WEC). WEC was requesting a license renewal of 40 years.

The CFFF is located in Hopkins, SC, and has a history of uncontrolled releases of radioactive and non-radioactive hazardous wastes into the environment including underlying groundwater. The LWVSC recommended renewal of the WEC license to operate the CFFF for 10 years stating that a shorter license renewal may incentivize WEC to become better stewards of South Carolina's environment and natural resources. This letter was submitted to the NRC on November 18, 2021. To date, the NRC has not responded to this recommendation.

The LWVHC also asked that the LWVSC oppose plans to construct the proposed Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) at the Savannah River Plant located near

Aiken, SC. A plutonium pit is the bowling ball-size radioactive core used to trigger the detonation of a nuclear warhead. The proposed Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility would have the capability of producing an additional 50 plutonium pits per year by 2030.

On December 7, 2021, the LWVSC submitted a letter to the White House (Nuclear Posture Review), Jennifer Granholm (Secretary of the US Department of Energy), and Jill Hruby (Administrator-National Nuclear Security Administration) opposing the construction of the SRPPF on the basis of 1) protection of the environment, 2) construction cost, 3) resumption of the nuclear arms race, and 4) the DOE should focus on a greater national security issue and growing existential threat – climate change. The White House, Department of Energy, and the National Nuclear Security Administration have not yet responded to this recommendation.

— Ted Volsky, LWVSC Issues Specialist, Environmental Policy; Co-Chair, LWVSC Environmental Working Group

Prefer digital only?

If you're currently receiving a print copy of the SC Voter and would prefer digital only, please email league@lwwsc.org.

Leagues in Action!

Leagues have been busy across the Palmetto State. Here's a snapshot:

Beaufort Area: Excitedly announced a Civics challenge to local (high school and college) students to create an educational tool about topics pertaining to local government.

Charleston Area: Commemorated the January 6 insurrection with a vigil and a march across the Ravenel Bridge to advocate for voting rights legislation. More than 30 people participated.

Columbia Area: Reading *Sum of Fears* (Heather McGhee); celebrated the 102nd birthday with a panel on local and African American women and voting rights.

Greenville County: With the hyper-partisan focus on education, hosted a virtual "Civics in the Classroom" presentation by experts with interactive breakout rooms. 35 participants attended

Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Area: Updated and reprinted the 2022-2023 *Guide to Elected Officials*; joined the HHI-BA Chamber of Commerce.

Horry County: Enrolled in VOTE411 from money raised at their December meeting, with thanks to all whose contributions make use of this vital online tool possible.

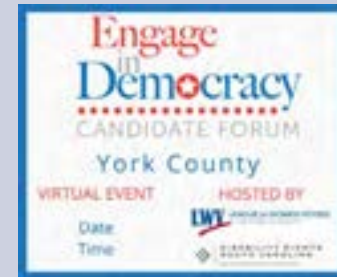
Spartanburg County: Reading *Overground Railroad* (Candacy Taylor) about the "Green Book"; launching a high school voter registration project; supporting our Local Redistricting Advisory Committee.



EMPOWERING VOTERS

Partnering for Candidate Forums

Co-sponsoring candidate forums with organizations which also commit to a nonpartisan event can expand the League's resources and reach. Examples include the LWV of Spartanburg County's and the LWV of York County's successful coordination with others engaged in voter education. We know there are more!



Registering peer-to-peer

Both members of the LWV of Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Area, Emily Miley King (right) and Isabella Miller (left), are passionate ambassadors for voter registration at their high school. The LWVHHI-BA Voter Services Committee works in concert with the LWV student ambassador



group, 14 students total, by supplying education materials in both Spanish and English, as well as eye-catching table posters and other materials.

Across the U.S., nonpartisan voter-turnout efforts increasingly focus on sparking people to get their friends to vote. Research indicates that learning a friend voted boosts their peers' likelihood of casting a ballot, and being encouraged to vote by a friend significantly increases turnout.

The premise of friend-to-friend organizing is that personal appeals are especially effective, even over mass texts or emails, because friends are often welcome and trusted messengers. Their success proves that Emily, Isabella, and their friends are!

"Do it online" or "Do it mobile"

Targeting younger voters — getting them registered and making voting a habit — the LWV of Greenville County created a very intentionally designed 2021 online campaign. Photos (young, active, and diverse mirroring the demographic) on high contrast, colorful backgrounds specifically include phones, their preferred method of operation.

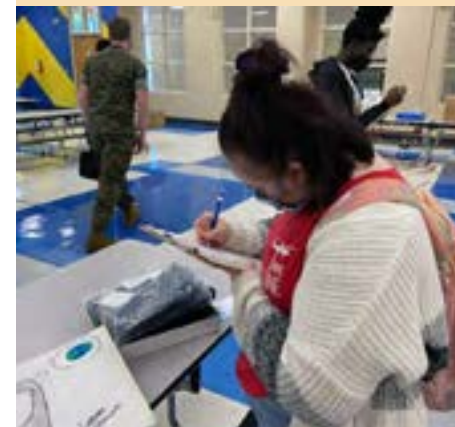
The "Do it online" or "Do it mobile" messages "were purposely brief and un-muddled calls to action. Too often we explain too much, and include a lot of if's or but's when we just need to say DO it!" advised Laura Haight, LWV Greenville Communications.

The League rotated posts among Facebook (not the best target for this demographic), Instagram, and Twitter. The message was repeated 5-7 times on each platform but with different images.



- ✓ Cap
- ✓ Gown
- ✓ Register to Vote

The LWV of Beaufort, SC Area seized the opportunity to register newly-eligible voters where they gather: picking up their graduation caps and gowns.



Made You Look! Joy Brown, member of the LWV of Charleston Area, went the distance to get out the vote. Did she attract attention? You bet!

THE LEAGUE AS ADVOCACY LEADER, PARTNER, AND EDUCATOR

At every organizational level — national, state, and local — the League engages in advocacy relevant to that level of government. Within each level, the League speaks with one voice, with officers and board establishing priorities at that level of government. Accordingly, the LWVSC board determines statewide legislative priorities, grounded in the good governance issues at the heart of the League of Women Voters. National and local boards similarly develop their own priorities, in keeping with appropriate positions and the identity of the League as a strong voice for democracy. Effective advocacy requires an identity, a “brand” that is recognizable to the public, partner organizations, media, and decision-makers.

The LWVUS strongly encourages Leagues not to try to be all things to all people, but to focus on our central “Making Democracy Work” advocacy. This is sound advice. The League has a broader function in member education and local advocacy, but at the State House we must be focused most heavily on our good government issues.

Within that context, we also must also consider pragmatic concerns:

opportunities, potential conflicts, and resources. This is a crucial responsibility. Very often the League is alone in pressing for action on issues related to government accountability, transparency, ethics, elections and voting. We take the lead on those issues.

We also work in partnerships and coalitions with other organizations to address issues in our national and state positions but must recognize that a focus on only a few major issues during a legislative session is necessary. No organization has the political capital to be all things to all people, and that is also true of the League.

The League leads.

Is it a core “good government” issue in accountable, transparent government, a “Making Democracy Work” issue? If so, it is likely to be a high-priority League issue.

Redistricting, ethics reform, judicial reform, voting and elections, regulatory reform, constitutional issues such as separation of powers, overall taxation and revenue policy, and home rule — these are issues on which the League takes a leadership role, advocating independently or helping to guide coalitions. Many other organizations depend on the League to lead advocacy in these areas.

The League partners.

Is the issue one in which there are organizations already advocating for the same or similar positions, and are they professionally staffed and funded for that work? Is the issue one in which specialist organizations seek/need our help?

Some groups (AARP, major SC environmental groups, and women’s rights groups like WREN and Planned Parenthood) are very interested in working with us as cooperative partners. We work together literally every day at the State House —and between sessions—on shared concerns, either as official members of coalitions or as more informal partners.

The League educates.

Some issues fall within areas in which the League has no position. In others, the League has a position but we are not active in State House advocacy. The League can provide educational opportunities on these issues, inform membership when direct member advocacy may be appropriate, and relay action alerts from specialist organizations.

Advocacy can require walking a tightrope. Attempts to insert the League into active State House lobbying in some areas can sometimes be unhelpful —and actually harmful —to our ability to work effectively on other issues on which our work is indispensable.

The League needs you.

Never doubt the strength of your voice as a constituent. Your local perspective and personal stories can make the issue “real” for your representatives. We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

When citizens advocate, democracy wins.

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

Janelle Rivers, New Education Advocacy Specialist

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina is extremely pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Janelle Rivers as Education Advocacy Specialist and registered LWVSC lobbyist.

Janelle retired from Lexington County School District One after 18 years as Director of Assessment and Accountability. She is a Chesterfield County native and a Columbia College alumna. After teaching high school algebra and fifth grade on James Island, she earned a M.Ed. in counseling and human services from Boston University and a Ph.D. in educational research from the University of South Carolina. She interned as a middle school counselor in Hartsville, managed teacher assessment and student assessment programs at the South Carolina Department of Education and worked as an evaluation specialist in Richland County School District One.

We’re delighted to add Janelle’s energy and expertise to our state advocacy efforts.



LWVSC RECEIVES BEQUEST



The LWVSC has received a bequest of \$10,000 from the estate of long-time League member Sarah E. Leverette. One of the first women admitted to the South Carolina Bar, a professor at USC, and its law librarian for twenty-five years, Sarah was widely admired for her legal acumen and her passion for good government issues.

Sarah also had a long and special relationship with the state League for over 65 years. When the legislature was in session, she could be found lobbying for the many causes she held dear. She was a mentor to Lynn Teague who says, “She was a phenomenal help to me when I first started representing the League at the State House.” Former lawmaker and state Attorney General Travis Medlock remembered that “Sarah worked with the League of Women Voters and told us what to do on serious policy matters—and we did it. And it turned out well.”

Sarah was a presenter at League Education and Advocacy Day in 2016 at age 96 and lived until her late nineties. Her papers are retained in the SC Political Collections at USC, which is supported by the Sarah Leverette League of Women Voters Endowment Fund held by the university.

The LWVSC board has named the received funds in Sarah’s honor and has designated them for use in establishing LWVSC Action, a future 501(c)(4) organization that will focus on its activities at the State House.

To include the LWVSC in one’s estate plans, one can simply identify a specific amount or a percentage of one’s assets and identify the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, P.O. Box 8453, Columbia, SC 29202 as the beneficiary.

In Memoriam Suzanne Rhodes, LWVSC Issues Specialist



In January, the League lost one of its most devoted members, and a fellow state board member, Suzanne Rhodes.

In the early 1960’s, Suzanne worked for NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Washington, DC, and later in Pasadena, CA. There she met and married Curtis, a widower, and helped raise his four children. After moving with her family to Columbia, Suzanne earned her Masters’ degree in public health at USC and began a 30-year career with South Carolina’s Department of Health and Environmental Control, retiring in 2006.

Suzanne was a dedicated community activist, promoting improvement of environmental and social justice issues. She joined the League in the 1980’s and contributed her expertise in environmental issues, especially in monitoring activities at the Savannah River Plant. She served in that capacity as a director on both the Columbia and LWVSC boards.

Suzanne provided a member update on the Savannah River Site Wastes at 2021 League Education and Advocacy Day. Her leadership and friendship will be greatly missed.

A Family Legacy in League

What could be more gratifying than to know that the beliefs and values that you held dear in your lifetime would be continued by other like-minded men and women after your death. We will all have a legacy. I want the work the League has done — and will continue to do — to be part of my legacy.

By leaving money in my estate to the League of Women Voters, I know I’ll be helping continue the work that my mother, Barbara Moxon, worked so hard for from when she joined the League in 1964 until her death in 2011. She inspired me and so many others to share their time and talents to the League’s high ideals to help make the world a better place.

I urge everyone who cares about our country, our democracy, your fellow citizens, and your own legacy, that regardless of your financial means, you leave something of yourself to the organizations you care about. That’s why I’m very happy to leave money in my estate to the League of Women Voters.

As Helen Keller said, “I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something: I will not refuse to do something I can do.”



Barbara W. Moxon,
LWVSC President,
1971-1977



Laurel Moxon Suggs,
LWVSC President,
1999-2005

— Laurel Moxon Suggs

Post Office Box 8453
Columbia, SC 29202

SC VOTER

Winter 2022 • Volume 71 Issue 1

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.

President: Nancy Williams

Editor: Mary Agnes Garman

Published by: *The League of Women
Voters of South Carolina*

PO Box 8453

Columbia, SC 29202

Website: lwvsc.org
league@lwvsc.org



The League of Women Voters of South Carolina is grassroots and volunteer-driven, so we depend on your support through time, talent, and treasure.

Today, more than ever, our state voice must be strong.

Support our statewide advocacy, education and outreach. Every gift helps!

Donate online: lwvsc.org
Mail: LWVSC, PO Box 8453,
Columbia, SC 29202

