

LWVSC: FRIEND OF THE COURT IN CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina (LWVSC) has been very active in redistricting since 2017, from working (unsuccessfully) for an independent commission to produce unbiased maps, through drawing our own maps and testifying repeatedly before committees developing the State plan. The SC House and Senate maps are now final and will be the basis of 2024 elections for the General Assembly. However, in 2022 the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF), assisted by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), demonstrated in federal court that Black

likely that no ruling has been made at the time that you read this.

We have not been litigants in that case, but the LWVSC VP for Issues and Action Lynn Teague testified at length before the three-judge panel in Charleston in support of the NAACP case. Now, we have filed an amicus brief in the Supreme Court case. Our brief is available on our website (my.lwv.org/lwvus/article/league-women-voters-south-carolina-files-brief-supreme-court-racial-gerrymandering-case) and also on the Supreme Court docket 22-807 at www.supremecourt.gov/docket/docketfiles/html/public/22-807.html.

coast) was drawn to about 17% Black Voting Age Population (BVAP), the lowest BVAP in the state despite the considerable strength of Black population in the region. BVAP varies from about 25% to 37% in the counties included in whole or in part in CD 1, with the exception of Beaufort in the far south at 17-18%.

The LWVSC amicus brief, prepared pro bono by the excellent attorneys at Duffy and Young in Charleston with the assistance of the League redistricting team, focused on the violation of communities of interest (COI). In the Enacted Plan, the Capitol building in Columbia is in the same congressional district as downtown Charleston, more than 100 miles. We note in our brief that “Fifty-five million years ago, the Atlantic Ocean and

Continued on page 5

The LWVSC VP for Issues and Action Lynn Teague testified at length before the three-judge panel in Charleston in support of the NAACP (Congressional District 1) case.

voters were systematically displaced out of the congressional district on the central and southern coast, Congressional District (CD) 1. The court ruled in favor of the NAACP, recognizing CD 1 as an illegal racial gerrymander in violation of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and demanded a new map from the General Assembly. The State has now appealed that ruling to the Supreme Court of the United States. With oral arguments scheduled for October 11, it is

The State admits that their goal has been partisan advantage for the majority Republican Party. They achieved that. The League’s unbiased map produced a CD 1 that was highly competitive, an estimated +1R — a voting history almost equally balanced between the parties. The Enacted Plan was estimated by the League to make CD 1 a +14R district, an outcome confirmed in the 2022 election. This was accomplished through racial gerrymandering. CD 1 (central and south

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Women's Equality: Turning Our Anger into Action

The verdict has been rendered: women are second-class citizens in South Carolina. On August 23, just three days before Women's "Equality" Day, our state Supreme Court ruled that the six-week abortion ban didn't violate the state's constitutional right to privacy. What irony!

I'm old enough to recall the cigarette ad aimed at women, which declared, "You've come a long way, baby." In many respects we have. When I was 22 years old, the school principal interviewing me for a teaching position asked if I had a boyfriend, his presumption being that a boyfriend would likely mean marriage, pregnancy, and my resignation. That same year, a Connecticut law forbade women from standing within three feet of a bar. When I was seeking a divorce at age 30, my credit card company refused to cancel my card without my husband's permission. Not so many years later, interview questions unrelated to job skills were deemed discriminatory, women could get their own credit cards, the Connecticut blue law was expunged, and Roe v. Wade became the law of the land. In part as a consequence of that decision, many more women entered the workplace, earned professional credentials, and ran for elective office.

Backlash and retrenchment in recent years, however, have set us back decades. Dobbs dismantled a woman's right to privacy, the "Me Too" movement seems to have lost force, and the ERA — despite the required ratification of 38 states — languishes in the halls of Congress. When women are not viewed as equal citizens and lose bodily autonomy, we lose control of our lives, are economically disadvantaged, are at increased risk of violence and death, and are less able to compete on an even playing field in work and in government.

What can we do? As LWV's President Dr. Deborah Turner has said, "We need to turn our anger into action." We need to continue to work to grow and diversify our membership and the number of League activists, raising our larger, collective voice in support of policy positions that support women and their families. We also need to work to help low-propensity voters see the link between their vote and the issues they care about, thereby increasing voter turnout. To that end, LWVSC launched a pre-election digital marketing campaign targeting women in three metropolitan areas of our state. When



more people — and more women — vote, our government better reflects the will of the governed.

In these pages, LWVSC's Gender and Women's Equity Working Group identifies the gender imbalance of representation in our legislative and judicial bodies and calls for us to consider running for office and supporting women who do. I echo that call. Only when we change who controls the levers of power in government can we truly make August 26 — or any day — Women's Equality Day.

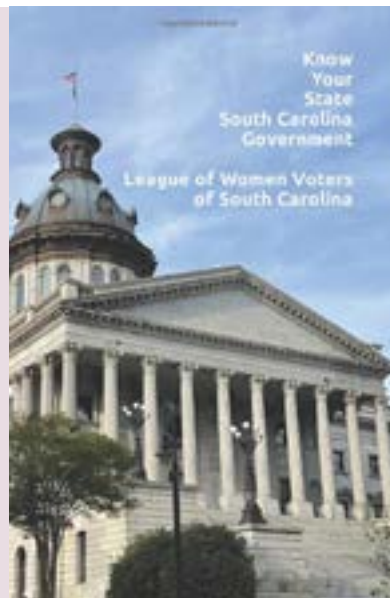
— Nancy Williams, LWVSC President

Just in Time for the Holidays...

Need ideas for holiday gift-giving under \$20? Consider empowering your South Carolina friends and relatives with the gift of *Know Your State: South Carolina Government*. First printed by LWVSC in 1972 and recently updated and edited by past LWVSC co-president Holley Ulbrich, *Know Your State* is a compendium of information about our state's constitution, branches of government, voting and elections, public education, finance and taxation, and local government and home rule. Now in its sixth printing, *Know Your State* is a guide to understanding how government works in our state and a tool to effective citizen advocacy.

Also available for purchase is our own Sheila Haney's *In Her Shoes: A History of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, 1920-2020*. This colorful history begins with the efforts of suffragists such as Eulalie Salley and features seven other remarkable women who've worked over the years to make democracy work for all of us.

Go to lwvsc.org and order your personal and gift copies via Amazon today!



OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT 2022-2023

GROWING OUR LEAGUE COMMUNITY

- 13 local Leagues in SC
- 2 member-at-large units
- 1,079 members

INCREASING VOTER ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

- 66,465 voters educated via VOTE411 (91,035 in 2022 calendar year for midterm elections)
- 7,285 people received voter registration assistance at 157 events with the help of 182 volunteers
- 70 candidate, issue, and education forums
- 1,040,433 people received information to actively participate in our democracy through voter and citizen education

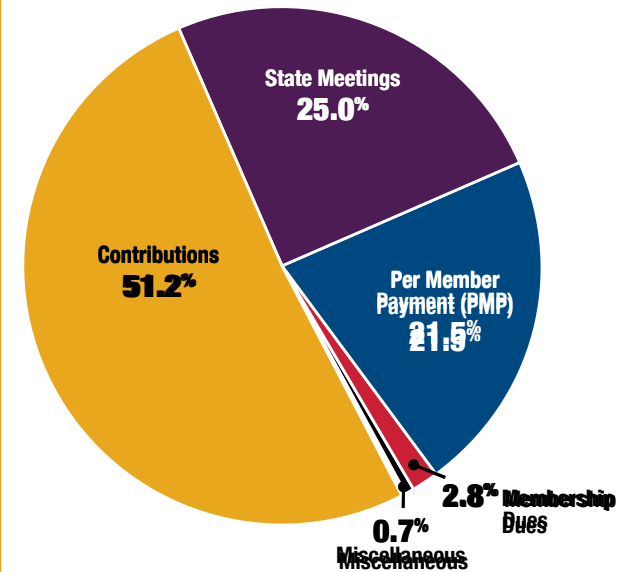
GROWING OUR ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM

- 21 state partners
- 9 Making Democracy Work Network Updates
- 119 local partners
- 25 oral and/or written testimonies at the State House
- 17 action alerts
- 120 activists attending monthly legislative updates

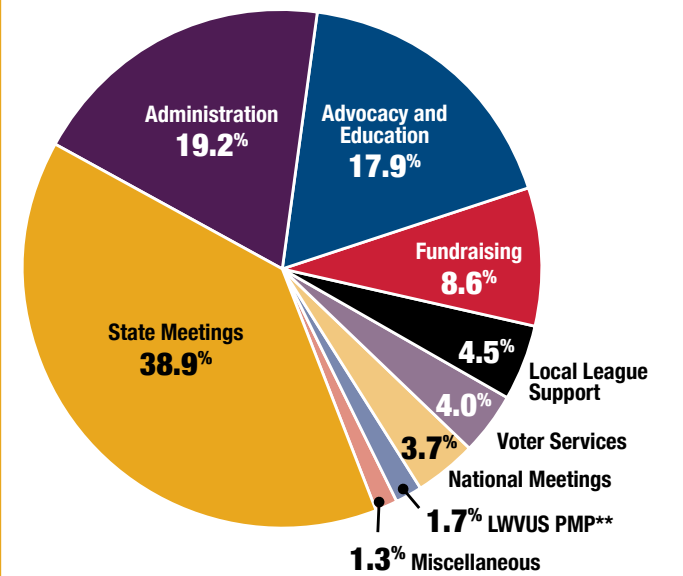
STRENGTHENING OUR OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

- \$33,093 raised in non-restricted funds; 4.2 percent increase
- 137 donors

Our Revenue



Our Expenses*



* In 2022-23, 66% of expenses supported programmatic efforts, including a state convention. One-fourth (25%) of expenses were attributable to general management, including contracted administrative services, state board meetings, and national meetings and dues. General management costs are skewed because all LWVSC programmatic activities are conducted by volunteers. Only 9% of expenses were attributed to fundraising, with a return of \$6.30 for every dollar invested.

** PMP is Per Member Payment to LWVSC as income or to LWVUS as expense

WHAT WOULD WOMEN DO?

Women's status in South Carolina is at the top of unwanted phenomena like domestic violence and maternal and child mortality, and at the bottom of desirable phenomena like equal pay, reproductive choice, and LGBTQ+ rights. To improve women's well-being requires a robust, diverse representation of women in government. Academic research shows this, and women in government know and live it.

Five bipartisan South Carolina state senators crystallized the point on April 28, 2023 when they marched together into the chamber to oppose restrictions on women's reproductive rights. All five senators wore buttons proclaiming, "Elect More Women."

Unfortunately, the number of women in state office decreased by two in the November election, leaving SC with 23 women in a state legislature of 171.

South Carolina Women in Leadership (WIL) reports that South Carolina is #47 in the nation for representation of women.

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As of December 2022 six countries have 50% or more women in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda 61%, Cuba 53%, Nicaragua 52%, Mexico 50%, New Zealand 50%, and the United Arab Emirates 50%. These are followed by Iceland 47.6%, Costa Rica 47.6%, S. Africa 46.5%, and Sweden and Andorra both at 46.4%. (statista.com)

The Institute for Women's Policy Research ranks South Carolina at #41, with a D grade on key quality of life

measures. Here is how our state ranks out of the 50 states:

- #41 U.S. Prosperity Index
- #41 Highest Rate of Poverty
- #42 Highest Maternal Mortality Rate
- #42 Rate of Violent Crime
- #45 Most Women Killed by Men

The paucity of elected women is echoed in the low number of women in South Carolina's judiciary. There is a link between these two phenomena, as the male-dominated legislature controls the process for selecting judges. Applications for judicial appointment are initially screened by a Judicial Merit Selection Commission (JMISC) which, like the legislature, is predominantly male. Its ten members are all appointed

by the legislature, and six are required to be legislators. Currently all six of the legislative members are men, as are two of the four other members.

The JMISC forwards to the legislature the names of up to three qualified candidates. The legislature then selects a judge from among the forwarded candidates. These judges must be reappointed every six years, and at that time they are again subject to JMISC screening and a legislative vote. Thus pleasing the legislature becomes important to reappointment likelihood.

This system of appointment and reappointment has resulted in a judiciary in which women are seriously under-



L to R: Penry Gustafson, Margie Bright Matthews, Katrina Shealy, Sandy Senn, and Mia McLeod. Credit: ABC News

represented because they are appointed by a legislature in which they are seriously under-represented. In the Circuit Courts, the trial courts in which most civil and criminal cases are heard, only 20% of the judges are women. The South Carolina Supreme Court has no women members at all. In its history there have only been two women that have ever served on the SC Supreme Court.

Inclusion of women is important to a fair system of justice. This was apparent in a case like *Planned Parenthood v. South Carolina* (2023), where the central issue was whether it is reasonable to allow pregnant women only six weeks to become aware that they are pregnant, consult their physician or clergy or family for advice, and make a decision as important and multilayered as whether to carry a pregnancy to term. The absence of women on the court meant that the issue was determined by a group of judges who had never and will never experience pregnancy.

What To Do?

There are many opportunities for interested persons to play a role in increasing the number of women in elective office. The important first step is

Kudos to SC's Sister Senators

The JFK Foundation has announced that South Carolina's five "sister senators" will receive its 2023 Profile in Courage Award for their joint efforts to block a near total abortion ban. The five senators — Margie Bright Matthews, Penry Gustafson, Mia McLeod, Sandy Senn, and Katrina Shealy—are being recognized for their two-day filibuster in which they took turns describing the complexities of pregnancy and the reproductive system, the dangers of lacking access to contraception, and inadequate privacy laws.

to get more women on the ballot. Each woman who reads this should give serious thought to the possibility of running for office. If becoming a candidate yourself is not realistic, you can become involved with South Carolina organizations such as WIL that recruit, train, and support women candidates. Persons active in political parties can try to have their party commit to quotas or gender parity goals in nominations.

Fundraising is an important part of every successful political campaign; you can boost the campaigns of women candidates with monetary contributions. Or alternatively, volunteer your time to assist with their campaigns. Candidates and political parties can be contacted online to find out how you can help. And, of course, when all the campaigning is over, go to the polls and vote for women candidates.

Promoting office-holding by women can also be pursued through systemic change. Some American jurisdictions are experimenting with ranked-choice voting systems, the use of gender-balanced party slates, or other electoral reforms which are potentially more favorable to women candidates. In other countries it is common for gender quotas to be used to achieve parity between men and women office holders. According to the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, half of the world's countries use quotas of some sort to make the numbers of women in government more commensurate with their numbers in the population. Among the accomplishments attributed to the

greater numbers of women are better pay for women, greater emphasis on health and safety for women, and an emphasis on peaceful coexistence with other countries.

Conclusion

In politics, there are no panaceas. Electing more women, however, would change agendas, increase responsive policymaking, and provide more constituent representation. Research, in addition to testimony from women in government, affirms that electing more women causes the status of women, as well as men and children, to rise. It is important for all South Carolinians that we begin to meaningfully address ways to increase female representation among our elected officials.

— Laura Woliver, Judith Polson, and Elizabeth Patterson, Members of the LWVSC Gender and Women's Equity Working Group

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REDISTRICTING

Continued from page 1

South Carolina's coast converged in the Midlands, more than one-hundred miles from the state's modern-day shoreline. Not since that time has Columbia held interests resembling those of Charleston County."

Our brief then documents a history of more than 350 years in which the areas surrounding the Charleston peninsula on the coast have made up a single COI with the peninsula. It is important that port facilities have been distributed from the west side of the Ashley River to the peninsula and on to the east of the Cooper River in what is now Mt. Pleasant. The CD 1 map divides the historic sites of those facilities, and in doing so divides the modern locations of South Carolina State Ports Authority facilities at Charleston.

There are impacts on voters elsewhere, of course. Everything in a redistricting map is connected. The Enacted Plan requires that high poverty rural areas of the I-95 corridor must compete for representation with a central slice of Charleston in CD 6.

And so, we wait to see if SCOTUS will join the earlier three-judge federal panel in protecting the rights of voters in CD 1 and adjacent districts.

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

“THE VOTE IS PRECIOUS”

The Vote. The great voting rights activist, John Lewis, reminds us, “The vote is precious. It is almost sacred. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democracy.” So it is that at this time of the year especially, Leagues across South Carolina devote themselves to registering more voters, educating all voters, and getting the word out about candidates through VOTE411 and candidate forums. Local leagues partner with local Chambers of Commerce, newspapers, community organizations, churches, and other non-partisan groups to bring information about voting and candidates to as many people as possible.

As a result of receiving a Making Democracy Work grant from the LWVUS, and supplemented by funding by the LWVSC, we were able to implement a digital outreach campaign targeting unregistered African American young women to register to vote on VOTE411 and then a second campaign to target the same group of registered voters to get out the vote. First impressions of the data are very promising.

Every Vote Matters. One of the dangers of this “sacred,” “precious” vote is voter apathy. In the run-off to the special election held on Sept. 5 in SC Senate

District (SD) 42 in Charleston and North Charleston, less than 8% of voters came out to vote. The winner was determined by 11 votes. Voter education fights voter apathy.

Get Out the Vote. As the election in SD42 reminds us, it’s not enough to have 52,000 people registered if they don’t come out to vote. While the League spreads the word about VOTE411 to help voters make a plan to vote, making voting easy, fair, and accessible is the key to getting people to the polls. No-excuse early voting, passed by the Legislature in 2022, with the advocacy of the LWV, has made a huge impact in the numbers of people voting in general elections. Across the state, election directors have noted the increase in voting at early voting sites in the two weeks before Election Day. While there is still some mistrust and some impediments for voting by absentee ballot, using early voting sites to drop off absentee ballots is one step toward making it convenient. Local Leagues are monitoring that the number and locations of early voting sites are accessible to all voters.



NO TIME TO VOTE Documentary.

The State League sponsored a viewing of this very moving PBS documentary on September 28, reminding us how precious voting and our democracy is. In the follow up discussion, the panelists asked, “How can we help election workers?” The answer: sign up to work at the polls. Contact your local county election office to be ready to work for 2024. And if you missed this excellent documentary, you should be able to find it on your local PBS station.

Protect the vote, protect democracy!
— Joan Zaleski,
LWVSC Vice President, Voter Services



Meet New LWVSC Intern Renee Stone

Renee is a US Air Force Veteran and Intern for the LWVSC. A first-generation college student, she holds a bachelor’s degree in human services from Anderson University with a focus in Behavioral Science and is currently pursuing a Master of Social Work at the University of South Carolina.

Originally from Illinois, she and her two teenagers have called South Carolina home for the past 13 years. Renee is passionate about legislative issues that impact families including access to health care, education, and child abuse prevention. In her spare time, she enjoys genealogical research and making stained glass.

WE APPRECIATE OUR DONORS

We couldn’t do it without you! LWVSC is grateful to each and every one of our donors. Your financial support helped advance our mission: 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!

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Why I Write the Check

Gratitude! I give in gratitude for the League’s historic and continuing support of democracy as I see democracies decline worldwide and as we resist assaults on voter access in SC. Our VOTE411 to inform voters costs in time and dollars. Join me in supporting the gifts, stipends, and grants to local Leagues to empower their use of VOTE411.

Gratitude! I give in support of the SC League leaders and activists who are registering voters, arranging debates, and advocating for the common good as volunteer lobbyists. While they are giving hours from their time on our planet, why shouldn’t I help pay the increasing costs or postage, web fees, and Zoom?

Gratitude! I give in support of League women and men all over the state who inform themselves about the issues through our alerts, the SC Voter, and Facebook, and who add that key question or fact to everyday conversations. Why not boost even more our current plan for social media outreach?

Gratefully, Nancy Moore,
Donor and LWVSC Director

Connect with us!

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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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The League of Women Voters of South Carolina is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public.

You can count on the League to protect the pillars of democracy — including voter rights, an independent judiciary, and public education — through our education and advocacy programs.

We need to count on you and your continued investment in our work. Every gift benefits our statewide efforts. Donate today!