

## WHAT'S AHEAD AT THE STATE HOUSE?

2022 will be the second year of our two-year legislative cycle in South Carolina. We continue to be busy advocating for redistricting that is fair to voters, an effort that may continue into 2022. That very important work is discussed in a separate article.

The regular 2022 session promises to be very challenging. Unfortunately, baseless claims of voter and election fraud have discouraged public confidence in our elections and too often lead to attempts to make access to the voting booth more difficult but no more secure. In a recent report, voting rights attorney Mark A. Posner documented the already restrictive and sometimes discriminatory nature of South Carolina’s current election laws.<sup>1</sup> Our concern for 2022 is to prevent this situation from becoming worse.

The issue was evident recently in a House Oversight Committee hearing to address citizen allegations of dead people having voted in 2020. As in the past (for example, in the well-publicized 2012-13 “zombie voter” scare<sup>2</sup>) this claim has been discredited by State Election Commission (SEC) officials. Nevertheless, claims like this feed pressure to make access to the voting booth even more difficult than it is at present.

Against this backdrop, we are already working on several bills that have received subcommittee hearings. S.113 would make several significant changes in absentee voting provisions. Subcommittee debate has been continued on this bill. Based on the subcommittee dialogue we

hope that an attempt to limit the return of absentee ballots to the voter and his or her immediate family members will have been deleted in favor of some less restrictive provision.

H.3444 (in its House version) and S.499 present alternative approaches to SEC composition and powers. The League opposes language that would give the SEC plenary or absolute authority over county election offices, supports Senate advice and consent for appointment of SEC commissioners, and does not object to SEC development of consistent regulations for the administration of elections. The next steps for these bills are not clear but we do not expect them to die entirely.

H. 3822 and H.4150 represent alternative perspectives on how to develop true no-excuse early voting in South Carolina. When the regular House session ended in 2021 there was dialogue about the potential to take good points from each to achieve better voter access while maintaining security.

Many other bills related to elections and voting were introduced in 2021 and could become active in 2022. We expect that more will be filed. They will be addressed as needed through League education and advocacy efforts.

In addition to voting and election concerns, we will also be engaged in efforts to stop a resolution in support of a federal constitutional convention going forward (H.3205). This bill would have very broad implications for our federal government, limiting not just its budget but its authority to enforce everything from regulations for orderly interstate

commerce to civil rights. The League is very opposed to this and similar bills, nationally and in South Carolina. We will also be concerned about bills in the broad range of League concerns, from ethics reform to healthcare and reproductive rights, racial and gender justice, education, the environment, the judiciary, and more.

We hope that members will respond to action alerts, participate in efforts to inform and educate voters, amplify our social media voice by sharing Twitter and Facebook posts, and engage with legislators as informed constituents to encourage a stable and healthy representative democracy in South Carolina.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Mark A. Posner, “South Carolina’s Recent Voting Rights History: 1996 to July 2021,” August 6, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Corey Hutchins, “18 Months Later, S. C. Law Enforcement Closes Case on ‘Zombie Voters,’ Finds No Fraud.” *Free Times*, Wednesday, 3 Jul 2013.

# President's Message: Telling Our Story

**M**y father used to quiz me when I was young by asking, "If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?" This popular riddle may be overused, but it resonates with me when I think of the work we do as a League. If we spend hours doing good work but don't tell our story, do we make an impact?

As the 2020 elections approached, local Leagues worked tirelessly to train volunteers and select venues for voter registration events. They staffed tables at community events, went to local high schools and colleges, and stood outside of Walmarts and local grocery stores to register voters. Volunteers also provided voters with information about registration deadlines, absentee voting opportunities, and in-person voting locations and times. We probably made thousands of contacts with new and existing voters, but we are only beginning to track the data that demonstrates that we have.

Our impact was geometrically increased by our use of VOTE411, our online guide to elections, local and statewide races, and the candidates seeking office. Nine of our local Leagues worked to develop the questions, recruit the candidates, and publicize this wonderful online tool. As you can see, we learned from website analytics that over 125,000 South Carolinians visited our VOTE411 site! We expect this number to grow as we approach midterm elections in 2022.

Also augmenting our reach to voters was a generous donation of \$25,000 from an anonymous donor so that we could reach under-represented voters, largely African-Americans, in rural areas of our state. In the weeks preceding the election, 500 radio spots with voter information ran on 19 local gospel and adult contemporary radio stations in the PeeDee, Orangeburg, and the lower Lowcountry regions of the state. Since voter turnout greatly exceeded that of 2016, we think this campaign played a role!

We also joined in a lawsuit challenging the South Carolina Election Commission's discarding of thousands of absentee ballots when a mismatch between the signature on the ballot and the signature on file was perceived. As a result, we succeeded in negotiating a requirement that voters be notified and given the change to fix a perceived disparity.

We worked with LWVUS' People-Powered Fair Maps grant initiative for the second year to educate the public about the importance of their insisting on the drawing of fair and equitable maps so that the voters, not legislators, pick their elected officials. We've tracked data as part of our grant "deliverables" and can show considerable impact.

As part of its transformation journey, LWVUS has been working with state and local Leagues to gather and report quantitative, as well as qualitative, information that tells our story and



demonstrates our collective impact. Here in South Carolina, we are working on doing the same.

Why is this important? When we are able to demonstrate our impact, we are able to recruit and retain more members, motivate more activists, attract more donors, build our brand, and increase our clout!

In this issue of *SC Voter* we're including a brief annual report that demonstrates some of the collective impact we've had this past year. We look forward to sharing future data. With your continuing help, we're making a difference!

—Nancy Williams, LWVSC President

## Here's to Strong Women Behind the SC Voter

The LWVSC extends our gratitude to **Linda Powers Bilanchone** who led the publication of the *SC Voter* as editor for the past four years. Linda's dedication and perspective as a long-time League member leave big shoes to fill.

Thanks, too, to **Christine Prado**, a League member and an Art Director at Clemson University, who continues to add the graphic polish to each edition. Christine also designed our popular "Stop the Gerrymander" bumper sticker. As Holley Ulbrich's daughter, she shares a passion for the League's mission. Whatever one's talents, you can help make a difference in the League.

*"Here's to strong women. May we know them. May we be them. May we raise them."*

## Prefer digital only?

If you're currently receiving a print copy of the *SC Voter* and would prefer digital only, please email [league@lwvsc.org](mailto:league@lwvsc.org).

## Follow us!

**Facebook:** League of Women Voters of South Carolina  
**Twitter:** LWV of SC  
**Website:** [lwvsc.org](http://lwvsc.org)

# OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT 2020-2021

## GROWING OUR LEAGUE COMMUNITY

- 13** local Leagues in SC
- 1** new League unit

## INCREASING VOTER ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

- 3 million** SC voters protected from disenfranchisement via lawsuit
- 125,284** voters educated via VOTE411 re: 265 races prior to 2020 election; 33 percent increase over 2018
- 5,585** voters registered via VOTE411
- 5,700+** people received voter registration assistance at 156 in-person events
- 500** election-related radio spots aired on 19 stations in rural areas of SC
- 40** virtual candidate forums held

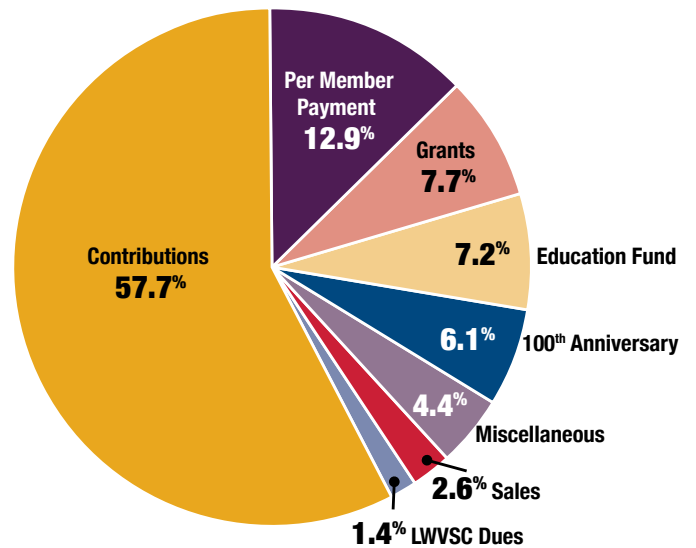
## GROWING OUR ADVOCACY AND ACTIVISM

- 25** advocacy partner organizations with reach of over 200,000 members
- 18** testimonies at the State House
- 33** action alerts
- 16** redistricting education events
- 2,000** members of the public engaged in the redistricting issue

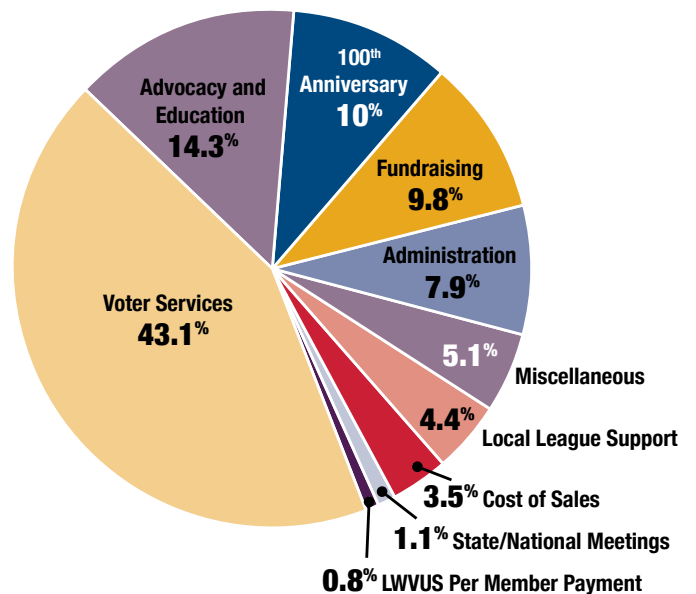
## STRENGTHENING OUR OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

- \$55,739** raised; 536 percent increase
- 183%** increase in number of donors

## Our Revenue



## Our Expenses



# REDISTRICTING STATUS 2021

**A**s this is written in early October 2021, statewide public hearings by both Senate and House have been completed. Both state and local League leaders have testified in those hearings and the League has submitted its own maps for consideration by both houses. League members are encouraged to check out the many redistricting resources at our website, [lwvsc.org](http://lwvsc.org), and share them with friends and neighbors to spread a better understanding of these crucial process. We believe that many will especially appreciate the opportunity to explore our maps in detail at the links provided.

Where does it go from here? We expect that redistricting committees in both houses will forward their proposed

maps to full Judiciary committees in their houses, and from there the maps will go forward to the full House and Senate. One concern is that time is short and the schedule for all of this remains undisclosed as this is written. March 16 is the statutory deadline to file to run in June primaries. The League will continue to monitor this situation, inform members and the public as information becomes available, and advocate for a fair process and outcome.

The League's position has been consistent throughout this process. We support use of LWVUS criteria for redistricting and we oppose incumbent and partisan protection. Protection of minority voting rights is extremely

important and includes maintenance of districts where minorities have an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice as well as avoidance of packing and cracking minority communities to dilute their influence.

For much more information on the League's redistricting work and how you can help, visit our website at [lwvsc.org](http://lwvsc.org). There are many resources there, including a link to our Zoom presentation introducing and explaining the underpinnings of the League's proposed maps. Stay involved. This is easily among the most important things going on in our politics!

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



## Save January 22 for LEAD

Please save the date and plan to join other League members from around the state at the LWVSC annual League Education and Advocacy Day (LEAD) on Saturday, January 22, 2022. LEAD is a time to learn, share, and get ready for the new legislative session. Plans for special speakers, briefings, and workshops, including one on nonpartisanship, are in the works.

Because of uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus, the LWVSC is considering either a hybrid meeting in Columbia or an all-virtual event. In either scenario, there is the likelihood that one or more workshops or webinars would be scheduled on an evening or evenings of the preceding week.

We will be sharing more information via eblasts and our website as we get closer to the new year. LEAD is open to all our members. We hope to "see" you there!

## We're Growing!

There's a lot going on in LWVSC's membership arena.

A new Member-at-Large (MAL) Unit has formed in Anderson County. Under the guidance of Holley Ulbrich, the Anderson MAL Unit has a leadership team and 22 members. Welcome, Anderson!

LWV of the Clemson Area, which covered three counties, encouraged the spin-off of Anderson County to permit better League coverage and growth in that area. In anticipation of Anderson's becoming a local League — and with LWVUS approval — the League in Clemson now has a new name: LWV of Oconee and Pickens Counties. This name better reflects the area that this League serves and will promote recruitment beyond the town of Clemson.

The LWVSC is also exploring undeveloped areas around the state. Christe McCoy-Lawrence, LWVSC's Director of Special Projects, and Joyce Franklin, Membership Services Director, began sowing seeds of League interest in Orangeburg this summer and have now recruited nine new members-at-large. This group is well on its way to becoming another MAL Unit!

# KELLER BARRON, 2021 COLUMBIA CITY OF WOMEN HONOREE

Longtime League leader Keller Bumgardner Barron is among nine women added to Columbia's City of Women map. The project, a joint venture of Historic Columbia and the Women's Rights and Empowerment Network, began in 2019 as an effort to put women in their (rightful) place – on the map. The newest class was unveiled as part of She Did Day, an annual event commemorating ratification of the 19th Amendment.

An Atlanta native with a degree in History and Political Science, Keller was immediately attracted to the governmental interests of the League of Women Voters

*The ERA is the only feasible and practical step to end the de jure discrimination against women.*

—Keller Bumgardner, *The Columbia Record*, February 21, 1973

of South Carolina. Shortly after joining in the 50's, Keller quickly embraced League leadership opportunities as local League president (1963-65), state president (1967-71), and national board member (1971-76).

Notably, Keller led the LWVUS campaign for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972 and locally served as the Co-Coordinator of the Equal Rights



The Columbia City of Women project celebrates the remarkable accomplishments of local women. Keller Barron (in red) is one!

Ratification Coalition of South Carolina with the National Organization of Women (NOW). Keller's honorary marker has been placed at 1517 Hampton Street, the Columbia building whose basement office served as the headquarters of the LWVSC and Equal Rights Ratification Coalition from 1973-1975.

Today Keller's commitment to the League's mission remains unabated. Keller served as the LWVUS delegate to the 2019 Conference of the UN

Commission on the Status of Women and continues to chair Columbia's VOTE411 initiative since 2017.

The Columbia City of Women project celebrates the remarkable accomplishments of local women with the hope that their stories will empower future generations. Keller's story is certainly one. Congratulations, Keller, from the many League members you continue to inspire in 2021.

## Power the Future with Time and \$

Your time and engagement are the greatest forces for strengthening our democracy, but donations leverage those forces. The LWVSC depends on individual contributions (58% of our revenue this past fiscal year) to help support our voter services, education, and advocacy programs.

Are you 72 years of age or older and required to take an RMD (Required Minimum Distribution) from your IRA-type account for the 2021 tax year? Call your provider (e.g., Vanguard, Fidelity, or broker) and ask how to make a contribution directly to the LWVSC.

You won't pay taxes on the distribution, and we will pay it forward by empowering voters and defending democracy.



# EMPOWERING THROUGH A DEI LENS

National Voter Registration Day, VOTE411, People Powered Fair Maps, and voting rights legislation have kept the League very busy. We are also busy with other League responsibilities in fulfilling the mission of “empowering voters and defending democracy.” How do we approach these and other upcoming League priorities through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion?

We must be intentional in how a program, a process, or a product is perceived by a variety of communities, voices, and perspectives. We must consider what, if any, barriers may exist that are preventing it from being equitable or inclusive of everyone.

Step back and take a look. When examining your work through a DEI lens, challenge your partners and ask yourself:

- Who is involved in the process?
- Who will be impacted?
- What are the intended and unintended outcomes?
- Does this align with our vision for an equitable and inclusive organization?
- What changes could be made to make this more equitable?

As League members, we commit to making deliberate efforts to ensure LWV is a place where differences are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard, and every individual feels a sense of belonging and inclusion.



We know that by creating a vibrant climate of inclusiveness, we can leverage our collective talents and empower allies to more effectively accomplish the important work ahead.

—Hannah E. Parker, LWVSC Director, DEI



Leagues took to the streets —and bridges—to rally support for voting rights legislation.



Where newly eligible voters gathered, Leagues were there.



To promote VOTE411, League members intend to catch the eyes of voters —coming and going.



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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.

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## HELP EMPOWER VOTERS AND DEFEND DEMOCRACY! GIVE TO THE LEAGUE!

### CONTRIBUTION FORM

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_  I wish my contribution to remain anonymous.  I've included LWVSC in my estate plans.

**Your annual or recurring gift empowers voters and defends democracy. You can donate with a one-time or recurring gift. Help advance our mission. Donate today!**

**Donations to the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, a 501(c)3 organization, are now tax-deductible.**

*We have added suggested levels of donations that you may choose:*

- \$1000 or more *Sarah E. Leverette Circle*
- \$500 to \$999 *Defender of Democracy*
- \$300 to \$499 *Suffragist*
- \$200 to \$299 *Advocate*
- \$100 to \$199 *Supporter*
- \$99 or less *Friend*

**Any amount is appreciated! You may contribute on the LWVSC website or mail a check to LWVSC, P.O. Box 8453, Columbia, SC 29202. Checks should be made payable to LWVSC.**

*Every little bit helps empower voters and defend democracy! Thank you for your support!*