

MIDTERM REDISTRICTING FIGHT

The big State House story for the League in 2026 has been midterm redistricting. We have won several battles this year, but the war for fair representation will almost certainly continue in the new legislative session that begins in January 2027.

Gerrymandering is an attack on representative democracy. The intent of a gerrymandered map is to enhance the impact of some voters while diminishing the impact of others for the advantage of preferred candidates (usually incumbents) and parties.

The voting rights of all citizens, regardless of race or gender, have been protected by the 14th, 15th and 19th Amendments to the Constitution, along with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). However, Chief Justice John Roberts and his colleagues in the majority in the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) have crippled attempts to require genuinely representative maps in several decisions, most recently *Louisiana v. Callais* (2026) which gutted Section 2 of the VRA and triggered this unprecedented effort at mid-cycle redistricting. It is important to emphasize that these SCOTUS rulings do not define gerrymandering as a positive good for the republic. It has simply been found to be non-justiciable, a very different thing.

So, what has happened in South Carolina?

We began in 2026 with H.4717, a congressional map drawn in Washington and introduced by Representative Pace and others. The map was drawn to attempt to yield 7 Republican districts by elimi-

nating the Democratic majority in District 6 (CD6), a district originally designed in 1990 to satisfy the VRA. We opposed this bill as an attack on the rights of voters to fair representation. (Read our testimony on lwwsc.org - Issues/Electoral Democracy).

There was quiet in South Carolina until the Callais decision in April gave states with VRA districts an opening to claim that racially defined VRA districts are no longer regarded as constitutional. This cannot be applied to the South Carolina congressional map which was explicitly ruled a partisan gerrymander by SCOTUS as it is now largely defined by partisan, not racial, interests.

Nevertheless, the effort to redraw the South Carolina map moved forward under pressure from the Trump administration, this time as H.5683 introduced by Representative Luke Rankin. This bill once more featured a map drawn in Washington without regard for legitimate redistricting criteria and planned to move the primary for congressional seats to August. Existing votes for those offices during the normal primary elections would be discarded. The LWVSC filed for an injunction alleging violation of the state Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) because of the inadequate notice of this meeting. Judge Daniel Coble denied the injunction.

The League and its advocacy partners on this issue reached out to voters in crucial regions through radio and text, asking them to call their senators to reject this bill. We pointed out that thousands of overseas military ballots had already been received and would be discarded, a slap in the face to those deployed to serve our nation. Voters responded and senators listened.

Quite a few senators who voted for the bill on 2nd reading were unwilling to throw out thousands of in person votes that had already been cast. Adding to the potential for disruptive overlap with regular voting, it was also known in the Senate that several lawsuits to stop this last-minute change were planned, including one by the League. With additional “No” votes because of this, the bill failed 3rd reading and died only 12 working days after it began its journey through the Assembly.

What issues contributed to the defeat of the bill?

Time was on our side, but there were very diverse reasons cited by legislators opposing the bill. One very conservative House member wrote in his constituent newsletter that he questioned whether it was fair to design a map that would give 60% of the state’s voters 100% of the congressional

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Midterm Redistricting Fight

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representation. He was right to question this. It is not fair.

Senator Shane Massey gave a remarkable and principled floor speech in opposition to adding redistricting to the Sine Die resolution in which he recognized the importance of a healthy minority party to good government. Like some other senators, he noted that if South Carolina is represented by members of only one party, it will often be at a disadvantage. Even more pragmatically, some senators acknowledged (as some House leaders had before them) that the proposed redistricting did not guarantee an all Republican US House delegation but could instead easily produce a 5 Rep/2 Dem delegation.

The League appreciates all legislators who voted against midterm redistricting at every stage, but especially those senators who voted against giving the bill 2nd reading on 5/23: Allen, Bennett, Campsen, Davis, Devine, Graham, Hembree, Hutto, Jackson, Massey, Matthews, Ott, Rankin, Sabb, Stubbs, Sutton, Tedder and Walker. Their constituents should reach out to thank them. We also thank the thousands of voters who mobilized to speak out, and to vote, when it mattered.

2026 is not the end.

The issue will resurface in 2027, probably including redistricting not just congressional but also South Carolina House and Senate maps. Stay tuned to mobilize for this truly central issue in protecting representative democracy. We must work together with renewed energy because these issues are certain to continue to threaten the foundations of our representative democracy.

— Lynn Shuler Teague, LWVSC Lobbyist

For the full article with more specific details, visit <https://bit.ly/midterm-redistricting>.

IT WAS A COSTLY FIGHT

Thank you to our volunteer lobbyists for their tireless efforts and to the dozens of you who answered the call for support contributing \$8,400 to LWVSC Action, our 501(c)4.

Membership: Their Whys, Our Roles

I have learned that the reasons people join the League of Women Voters vary. Talking to new members has helped me appreciate that each League member is unique.

I love to hear why new members decide to join. A friend who recently joined the League told me it was for the emails. I had to smile because I know that some members join despite the emails! She explained that she knew she could trust the information she received from the League. As she pointed out, it is easy to be inundated with information from unreliable sources.

This friend, a leader in the community, has decided she is too busy at this moment to regularly participate in League activities, but many new members join because they are eager to be put to work immediately. They want to work with other League members to register and educate voters, to meet fellow members and work with them on issues of importance to the League and to themselves.

Many of our new members have joined in response to current threats to democracy. They are ready to “empower

voters and defend democracy.” Perhaps they have seen the League at the “No Kings” rallies held across the state or have been to the LWVUS website and learned about the League’s commitment to fighting for democracy. They want to be part of that fight.

For those of us who are League leaders, it is important to meet our new members where they are and work with them to make sure their goals for League membership are met. *Communication is key.* For example, if we learn that a new member is homebound but has joined the League to get involved and to stay informed, we can provide information about committees that meet on Zoom and about online events like LWVSC Legislative Updates.

All League leaders play a role in this work, but the people who know new members best are local membership directors and teams. They provide members with the information to get started in the League and they get to know members as individuals, each with their own reason for joining.

— Christine Hait, Director, Member Services

LWVSC Contacts

The state League has established dedicated email addresses for itself and for its board and staff. This is important for the continuity and communications of the organization. Check out this convenient list to connect with the work of the League!

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ON OUR WAY TO THE MIDTERMS

We are midway between our June Primaries and the midterm General Elections on Nov. 3. Before we look ahead, let's look back at how the Primaries turned out, literally and figuratively.

The goal this year was to increase voter turnout in the Primaries. We can celebrate that 25% of registered voters turned out to vote on June 9, especially in early voting. Those results were better than in 2022 when turnout was just 17%. No doubt the efforts by our national and state politicians to try to gerrymander our state while early voting was going on created a strong reason for people to turn out. The many races that were contested also got voters interested. They had choices and that was reflected in the number of runoffs following the Primary. Now that the candidates have been selected for the races of Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Comptroller, Superintendent of Education, Secretary of Agriculture, US Senator, all 7 Congressional Districts, all members of the SC House of Representatives and many local races, we can plan for voter registration and the League's VOTE411 Online Voter Guide.

As we look ahead to the General Election on Nov. 3, we need to be aware of efforts to make voting more difficult for voters, both at the national and state levels.

- The League is on record to oppose passage of the SAVE America Act on

the federal level. South Carolina has sufficient voter ID safeguards without disenfranchising married women and members of the military.

- We oppose any efforts by the US Postal Service to delay mailing out absentee ballots. At the recommendation of the State Election Commission, we encourage anyone who needs to vote with an absentee ballot to apply early. It is not too early to request an application NOW from your local Board of Elections.
- Support those who work at the polls.
- Consider becoming a poll worker yourself.
- Join a National Voter Registration Day event with your local League on 9/22.
- Urge candidates to participate in VOTE411. If you don't see a response from a candidate in one of your races, tell them their response is important for you.

With the Voting Rights Act becoming a shell of what it was, it is more important than ever for the League to continue advocating for free and fair elections for all. The LWVUS has declared our democracy is under siege. Strengthening and protecting voters and elections is on the mind of every League member this election cycle. Work to make sure more people CAN vote and WILL vote. Join us on our march to the midterms this November!

— Joan Zaleski, VP for Voters Service



Celebrating Our Country's 250th Anniversary

To help celebrate our country's 250th birthday, 58 poets, authors and members of the League of Women Voters across the country contributed to this poetry anthology to remember, reflect and recommit to what we stand for. The book is available at Amazon.com.

One of the poems selected for this anthology was written by our own Elizabeth Sumner Jones, a member of the LWV Columbia Area. It's a personal poem to reflect and honor those who fought and died for liberty. We thank Elizabeth for allowing us to share it here.

Revolutionary Remembering

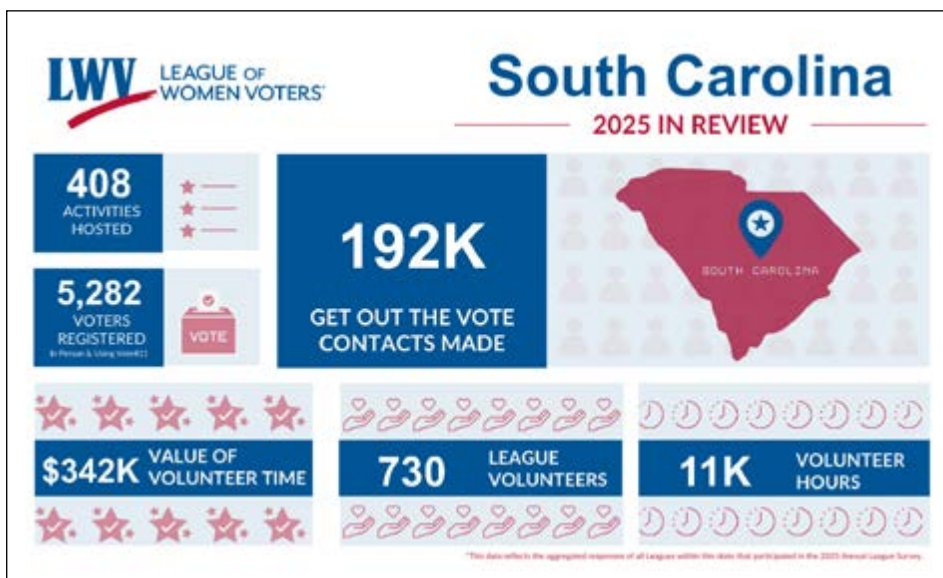
With tears I kneel at your grave,
Pvt. John Peter Corn.

In my veins your blood I save
And carry since I was born.

You wintered a cold, bitter winter
With injured men in Valley Forge.
You built a campfire from a splinter
And followed that great General George.

No Fife and Drum led you there,
But freedom from the English king!
Still the desire throbs everywhere
That freedom forever may ring!

As our nation celebrates 250 years,
Out of wars we have been born,
We first kneel at graves such as yours,
Pvt. John Peter Corn



LWV NATIONAL CONVENTION 2026

The National League of Women Voters holds their convention every 2 years. This year's convention took place in Columbus, Ohio, June 25-28, with just over 1000 League members from across the country present. A portion of these attendees were virtual. League members were able to attend breakout sessions on current League topics and there was time allotted for internal business related to program planning, electing officers, voting on a 2026-2028 budget, concurrences, resolutions and by-laws. There were 24 members from South Carolina taking part.

Both President Dianna Wynn and Celina Stewart, Chief Executive Officer, made insightful opening remarks. It was noted that the League is a grassroots organization that has grown bolder over the past couple of years. This is mainly due to a constitutional crisis in Washington DC. Over the past 2 years, the League has welcomed 18,000 new members and won 77% of its court cases.

Program planning was the first area of focus. The approved program plan for



2026-2028 is Women Defend Democracy: *Democracy Under Siege*. This includes Voting Rights, Redistricting, Individual Liberties, Immigration and the Presidency. Topics that were not recommended for concurrence but were adopted during Convention included Colorado's Freedom of Religion proposal and New York's Privatization vs. Public Goods proposal. A proposal for African American studies in schools was not recognized because it did not meet the requirements for submission.

The resolutions that were introduced to members were as intriguing as the concurrence topics. The following resolutions were passed: National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, DC Statehood, Federal Video Surveillance Overreach and Board Emergency Powers.

There were a variety of by-laws that were up for a vote. The following were passed:

- LWV committee members have rights and responsibilities
- National board has emergency powers during catastrophic events
- Nominating committee members exhibit appropriate and responsible behavior
- Budget schedule aligns with the biennial calendar.

The following proposed by-laws did not pass: several related to student members and cost of dues and the Inter-League Organization member rights.

The college student voice was strong at the Convention and there was a good representation of men. The conference concluded with a Fireside Chat between newly elected President Sania Irwin and CEO Celina Stewart. Stewart and Irwin encouraged members to show up as their authentic selves and to be bold. "Nobody has to do everything, but everyone has to do something."



Some Delegates to the Convention (L to R): Christine Hait, Karen Ebbets, Tristan Johnson, Pat Spurlock, Marianne McGrath, Nicole Sanchez, Rachel Dieter, Fran Hersh

Thank you to the following 24 League members who represented South Carolina at the League's National Convention in Columbus, Ohio. They voted for a new slate of officers, a two-year budget, proposed program items for the 2026-2028 cycle and by-law changes. They attended in person and online, as delegates or observers, and we look forward to hearing from them!

- LWVSC: Rachel Dieter, Paula Egelson, Christine Hait, Rebecca Jacobson, Joan Zaleski
- LWV Charleston Area: Cara Erickson, Judy Manning
- LWV Columbia Area: Kathryn Brookins, Tristan Johnson, Marianne McGrath, Sara Phillips, Nicole Sanchez, Elva Stinson
- LWV Georgetown County: Karen Ebbets
- LWV Greenville County: Jean LePere, Sharda Jackson Smith
- LWV Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Area: JoAnne Gatti-Petito, Deborah McGivern
- LWV Horry County: Fran Hersh
- LWV Oconee-Pickens Counties: Patricia Spurlock
- LWV Spartanburg County: Jan Benjamin, Darcell Davis-Williams, Becky Slayton, Ruth Stanton



Conway Belangia, Executive Director, SC State Election Commission



David Keely (L) and Christine Hait (R)



Hannah E. Parker (L) and Lawson Wetli (R) presenting.



Jeri Cabot (L) and Sarah Petkus (R), LWV, Charleston Area, sharing their League's work in the poster session.

2026 STATE COUNCIL

UNITE AND RISE: BUILDING COMMUNITY, STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

The LWVSC State Council was held on Saturday, June 20, at the Midlands Technical College, Beltline Campus, in Columbia. Council is not a business meeting but an opportunity for members to develop leadership skills and to network. The theme reflected state and national efforts to strengthen our movement of voters engaged in protecting our democracy.

Lynn Teague, LWVSC VP, Issues & Action, introduced our speaker, Conway Belangia, Executive Director of the SC State Election Commission (SEC). He began by praising the LWV for its work and mentioning that “women out vote us!” He addressed the work the SEC does in the voter registration process, recognizing that state law dictates its policies. At about 80% of the eligible population registered to vote, SC is about mid-level among the states. Turnout, however, is a different story. Primary turnout at 25% was a lot better than in 2022, but that is still a small fraction of the eligible voters. He addressed questions concerning

Ranked Choice Voting, closed vs. open primaries, the inaccuracies in using hand-tabulated paper ballots, the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the US Department of Justice to protect the privacy of voters and the problem with USPS not delivering absentee ballots on time. On early voting, which has become very popular with voters, he shares that it costs the SEC more money to open and operate voting locations across the State, including hiring poll workers for that additional period. He urged the Legislature to add funds for early voting. Our members appreciated the time Mr. Belangia gave to their questions and he promised to return again.

Discussions on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion took place over two afternoon workshops. Lawson Wetli, LWVSC State and National Program Director, Hannah E. Parker, LWVUS Governance committee member, Christine Hait, LWVSC Membership Director, and David Keely, LWVSC DEI Director, led our members to identify interpersonal challenges faced

SAVE THE DATE

LWVSC Biennial State Convention
June 25-26, 2027
North Charleston
Hosted by the LWV of the Charleston Area

in our Leagues and then to reflect more deeply how we might address them in our work. Issues in local Leagues include technology, thinking about where/when we hold meetings, engaging partners, building leadership and how we communicate with each other. These sessions came about from both Lawson and Hannah E.’s attendance at LWVUS Council last year where they participated in an all-day DEI event and learned strategies and techniques to address challenges and solutions. Dahlia Handman, LWVSC Governance Director, surveyed our local members this year, asking their thoughts on various DEI issues related to local Leagues as well as our state League. The results of that survey demonstrated that spending the afternoon reflecting and discussing with each other, as we did, can work toward transforming ourselves and our Leagues.

There is no doubt that members who attended Council this year from 11 local Leagues and 1 Member-at-Large (MAL) Unit returned to their Leagues with a deeper understanding of the work we do.

LWVSC has been awarded an \$8,000 Making Democracy Work grant from the LWV Education Fund. It will be used for a text-banking initiative this fall to get out the vote. We'll be sharing how you can join in the effort soon!

Around the State



Nine LWV Georgetown County members including Alex Belser and Cathy Filiatreau (pictured) participated in PFLAG PRIDE Pizza in the Park.

LWV Georgetown

LWV of Georgetown County South Carolina received their IRS 501(c)(3) approval as of 4/26/26. They have filed with the Secretary of State and have opened a checking account. LWVSC has sent them their funds and their Bylaws were already approved by LWVUS. They are no longer a MALU, but a local League with 64 members as of mid-May!

LWV Charleston

LWV Charleston has wrapped up an active Primary election season with:

- In-theater Movie Campaign (Vote! & VOTE411): 5 theaters, 125,000 attendees
 - VOTE411 candidate info for 3 counties
 - Live Forums: both parties for Congressional SC-1
 - Virtual Forums: State House seats, Special School Board election
 - VOTE411/Election Info postcards at multiple events
 - Student Registration: Public and private schools, 3 counties
 - Co-President Jeri Cabot: Interviewed on local TV about voter concerns and runoffs
- Other Issues:
- Healthcare: Research & outreach to school leaders regarding declining vaccination rates

- Environmental: Energy and data center study and advocacy
- Observer Corps: Governance issue with Library Board
- Immigration: Panel about local impacts
- History-focused documentary discussion group
- Annual Meeting: VOTE bracelet-making, research by a College of Charleston professor
- Development: 99 volunteers and 66 individual donors
- Community Film Screening: Celebrate civic participation!



SC-1 Primary Forums on May 16; Democratic candidates in morning (above), Republican candidates in afternoon (bottom); with moderator Gavin Jackson, SCETV.

LWV Spartanburg

LWV South Carolina placed electronic billboards around the state (including Spartanburg County) to promote informed voting in the June 9 primaries. The LWV of Spartanburg County wanted to build on this effort, so members donated more than \$1100 and they received a grant for \$550 from LWVSC. This funded 5 more billboards around the county - 4 digital and 1 traditional.



Members of the League of Student Voters at May River High School with their faculty advisor.

LWV Hilton Head Island-Bluffton

May River High School, Bluffton, SC, has an exciting new accredited group. After working as League of Women Voters of Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Area (HHI-BA) student representatives, Serenna and Airo decided it was time to take a stronger student stance. The League of Student Voters (LSV) sprang into action with a faculty mentor and 17 active members. Their mission is "To amplify the voices of those who are ignored when it comes to social issues that directly impact them." To this end, they published their first 4-page newsletter for all May River students. The edition included 6 well-researched articles about book bans and a commentary about the second local "No Kings" Rally. Future editions will tackle other high-interest topics.

The group's goals include student voter registration/education in collaboration with our League and expansion of the LSV to other area high schools. Students who learn to mobilize their peers today will be the organizers, poll workers and community leaders of tomorrow. We are proud to support the May River LSV with tools and confidence, understanding that their voices have always been - and will always be - critical to the health of our republic.



Make a Bequest to Leave a Legacy of Activism

Join our Legacy Society

Including the LWVSC in your estate plans is a powerful gift that will help ensure our ability to continue fighting for democracy in South Carolina for years to come.

Have you already included our League in your estate plans?

Please let us know so we can thank you for your visionary dedication to the LWVSC. Contact Laurel Suggs, Treasurer.

A YEAR OF IMPACT AND GRATITUDE

As we conclude Fiscal Year 2025-26, we are pleased to report that the League of Women Voters of South Carolina remains on budget and financially sound. Our mission to empower voters and defend democracy is made possible largely through the dedication of our member volunteers who contribute countless hours of service to our many programs and activities.

We also have three outstanding part-time staff members whose work strengthens the League every day: Anita Baker, Administrative Assistant; Rebecca Jacobson, Development Manager; and Shelby Cohen, Social Media Manager. Their professionalism and commitment help us extend our reach and effectiveness across the state.

Together, our volunteers, members and generous non-member donors enable

the League to make a positive impact in communities in ways that are often impossible to measure. We are deeply grateful for their financial support and active involvement that sustain our work. As we look ahead, we encourage everyone to continue supporting the League with your time, talents and treasure. Working together, we will continue to empower voters and defend democracy throughout South Carolina.

—Laurel M. Suggs, Treasurer

Thank You to Our Donors

Your support helps us fight for democracy through voter services, member education, local League support and legislative advocacy. *Thank you all!*

Sarah Leverette **\$1000+**

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If you are 70 ½ years old, you can make a QCD to the LWVSC from your Traditional, Inherited, inactive SEP or inactive SIMPLE IRA. Contact your IRA administrator to request a direct charitable distribution form.

Donor Advised Funds (DAF)

You can direct a donation to the LWVSC by making a grant recommendation through your DAF portal or advisor.

Donate Today!



lwvsc.org



@LWV-South-Carolina

Mail check payable to:

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Columbia, SC 20202

This list reflects donations received between 7/1/2025 and 6/30/2026 to both LWVSC and LWVSC Action, our 501(c)(4) organization. We have made every effort to ensure accuracy. If you believe we have made an error, please contact Rebecca Jacobson, Development Manager, rebecca.jacobson@lwvsc.org.

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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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Marching to Midterms June 30 Fiscal Year-End

