



APRIL 16, 2021

## MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK IN SC: A DIFFICULT WEEK AT THE SC STATE HOUSE

Both houses of the General Assembly scheduled very important bills for subcommittee hearing this past week. Because April 10 was crossover day, these are not likely to pass this year but this is the first year of a two year cycle and they can live on through 2022.

Senator Campsen's subcommittee met in Gressette 207 at 2:30 PM on Wednesday, April 14, and Rep. Jordan's Elections Subcommittee of House Judiciary met at 9:00 AM on April 15 in Blatt 110. On the whole, the results were not encouraging for those of us who wish for a healthy representative democracy in our state and nation. We have a lot of work to do.

## SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE: CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS AND DARK MONEY

Senators Campsen, Hutto, Young, McLeod, Garrett

Senator Campsen's subcommittee was rescheduled for Wednesday afternoon. S. 33, 133, 141, and 363 are all variants of resolutions calling for a federal constitutional convention to address amendment of the U. S. Constitution under the terms of Article V. In spite of short notice, a large crowd of "grassroots" supporters of a constitutional convention resolution turned out and there were two overflow rooms, at least one of which became noisy and unpleasant. The excellent work of the Senate Sergeant at Arms Chuck Williams and his staff was very much appreciated during this meeting.

We have posted a general discussion of these resolutions at [https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/constitutional\\_convention\\_resolutions.pdf](https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/constitutional_convention_resolutions.pdf). We once more heard Mark Meckler and other familiar faces present constitutional interpretations that are not shared by legitimate truly independent constitutional scholars as if they were established fact. Our testimony for these bills focused on the catastrophic economic fallout if the major supporters of this movement (the Mercer Family Foundation, the Kochs, etc.) get what they want. It did not help. (The testimony will be posted soon at <https://my.lwv.org/south-carolina/legislative-advocacy>.) The most comprehensive and troubling of the resolutions, S.133, was forwarded with a favorable recommendation. It now goes to full Senate Judiciary.

The remaining bill taken up by this subcommittee, S. 174 by Bennett, Leatherman, Hembree and Rankin, addresses the crucial issue of dark money. This bill focuses on requiring disclosures from those groups that do not have the primary mission of influencing voters in elections but do carry out electioneering activities. The League submitted written testimony on this bill prior to the last meeting of this subcommittee and Lynn Teague testified for the League on Wednesday afternoon ([https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/s.174\\_dark\\_money\\_testimony\\_lwvsc.pdf](https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/s.174_dark_money_testimony_lwvsc.pdf)). Debate on the bill was continued, it may or may not be taken up again by subcommittee.

#### HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE: ABSENTEE VOTING

Representatives Jordan, Bryant, King, B. Newton

Testimony on H. 3822 by Representatives Cobb-Hunter and Brawley was heard on Thursday morning, and continued to a later meeting of the subcommittee. This bill would build upon the successes of 2020 to improve access through both in-person and mail early voting. It would institute well-tested approaches to ensuring secure accessible voting for qualified electors. All of the testimony offered was strongly favorable to H. 3822. However, this is far from a guarantee of success for this excellent bill.

H. 4150 remains on the subcommittee agenda and will be heard following a vote on H.3822 when the subcommittee reconvenes. This alternative approach to absentee voting would offset in-person (not mail) early voting with restrictions that would lead to reduced access to the ballot for many others. County election offices would be deprived of the ability to distribute early in-person voting locations and establish hours most effectively. A formula in the bill dictating numbers of early voting locations would seriously harm ballot access for communities of color. Some voters (those out of their home county for business or pleasure for several weeks prior to the election) would be entirely disenfranchised. Others will find voting more difficult. This bill is unequivocally an attempt to suppress votes.

It is not too late to weigh in on these important bills when the subcommittee reconvenes. If you have not done so, please plan to add your voice to those seeking secure accessible elections for all South Carolinians. You can find a review of the elements of both of these bills in our previous update, posted on-line at [https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/mdw\\_update\\_11.pdf](https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/mdw_update_11.pdf).

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