



THE VOTER

November 2020, Vol. 47 No. 6

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area
Serving the Citizens of Pickens, Oconee and Anderson Counties

Co-President's Message

Raise a glass to the United States election process and to all of you who helped to make it safe and fair this past (well, almost past) election season. By the time this issue reaches your inbox or mailbox, the smooth transition should be in place, and we can move on to our next efforts. The next major election is now less than two years away, and we have the infrastructure in place to be ready for it.



Ruth Reed

Eleanor Hare has written a “crib sheet” for the next round of Vote 411, which we will store in our new web page as soon as we develop a passworded members only section, ready for the next group to move into action.

The members of the Safe and Fair Elections group convinced **Shari Jung** and **Janet Marsh** to continue the group in “maintenance mode” so that we don’t lose the contacts with and knowledge about the election commissions of our three counties. Thanks to **Liz Vogt** and **Linda Gahan**, we now know how to run virtual candidate forums. In fact, Zoom has become our friend in many ways, from our Board meetings to our program meetings to many smaller meetings. I’m learning to love Zoom especially for small meetings. I’ve met a few cats I wouldn’t have met if it weren’t for Zoom, and we’ve gotten business done very effectively—in fact, finding a time to Zoom is much easier than finding a time (and place) for the old-fashioned in-person meetings.

We have concrete issues to work on going forward: continuing to help **Shelia Crawford** and the NAACP register everyone in Pickens County with plenty of lead time now; continuing to support **Cheryl Lee** in registering students; setting up new initiatives (working for no-excuse absentee voting, for example); and much else.

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League of Women Voters Clemson Area
Serving the Citizens of Pickens, Oconee, and Anderson Counties
P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633
www.lwvclemsonarea.org

OFFICERS:

- Ruth Reed, Co- President
- Michael Wood, Co-President
- Jill Gemmill, Vice President
- Toni King, Secretary
- Bill Hare, Treasurer
- Elaine Laiewski, Treasurer

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- Kathy Bargeron
- Sheila Crawford
- John Dyar
- Janet Marsh
- Sarah McNeil
- Catherine Mobley
- Sandy Rosche

APPOINTED BOARD:

- Eleanor Hare, Vote411
- Mike Ellison, *Voter* Editor
- Janie Shipley, National Representative
- Holly Ulbrich, State Co-President
- Sandra Gray, Past Co-President

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, December 8, 2020:	Get to know our newly elected public officials. Zoom, 7:00 PM
Tuesday, January 19, 2021:	Recap of League election work Zoom, 7:00 PM
Saturday, January 23, 2021:	LEAD (League Education and Advocacy Day) Zoom 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM
Saturday, January 30, 2021:	Local league “retreat” for program planning Zoom, 10:00 AM -12 noon

Vote411 and the Down-Ballot Races

In the general election, three out of four of the down-ballot races had a single candidate. The reasons are clear. High-visibility positions such as county council and sheriff were settled in the primary, and if the county auditor, clerk of court, coroner, and treasurer are doing a good job, nobody challenges them. We were pleased that a third of the unopposed candidates participated in Vote411, telling the voters about their views and the requirements of their office.

All candidates in the Clemson area participated, including **Sen. Thomas Alexander**, who was unopposed. Also, five out of six candidates for Oconee County School Board participated. (The one who did not participate was unopposed.) We included all candidates in our three counties in the Vote411 listing. Candidate participation is gradually increasing.

We received support in distributing our flyers from the City of Clemson, the Clemson University Emeritus College, the Easley Chamber of Commerce, our members, and the candidates.

Local newspapers (*Seneca Journal*, *Sentinel-Progress*, *Anderson Independent*, *Belton News-Chronicle*) published our letters promoting Vote411.

Submitted by Your Vote411 team: Kathy Barger, Kathy Clark, Alice Flower, Eleanor Hare, Janie Shipley

November Meeting - Addressing the Digital Divide in Education

Dr. Barbara Nesbitt, Assistant Superintendent for Technology Services Pickens County School District, provided much food for thought in her presentation on the need for broadband internet access for schools from preschool through high school. She stressed the importance of ‘telling the story’ to get public support for equipping all school systems with robust internet capability. She described the success that Pickens County under the direction of **Dr. Danny Merck**, Superintendent, has had in establishing a fiber-optic network for the fourteen elementary schools, five middle schools, four high schools, and one career technology center educating 16,000 students. The system is also linked with Clemson University. The story of getting the funding, then developing the system showed the importance of optimism, understanding of the technology, persistence, and the ability to go after federal funding. The proposal for the up-front investment in broad-band fiber-optic system that would pay for itself in less than eight years was accepted, with the help of federal grants, and is now in place. In addition to the cost of installing and running the network, Dr. Nesbitt presented the analysis of time saved by having a robust network just in testing and pointed out the advantages of being able to offer distance learning, such as AP classes for only three or four students at a particular high school. Dr. Nesbitt projects that now the Pickens example can expand across the state to provide broadband access to schools.

But she also pointed out that broadband access needs to be provided to users at large. Students without access at home are at a significant disadvantage. She made the analogy to introduction of electricity in the early twentieth century. Electricity was a service that was completely new; it was not like moving from well water to ‘city water’ or from septic tanks to sewer lines. Similarly, internet access requires a concerted governmental effort. Key to the process of getting broadband for the Pickens County school system was the passage of legislation allowing electric co-ops to provide broadband. This legislation also allows for increased broadband access to all county residents.

This summary doesn’t begin to do justice to the story Dr. Nesbitt told. She has graciously allowed us to make her PowerPoint presentation available; it will be included in the emailed version of the *Voter* and on the website. She has also agreed to keep us posted on additional developments. This is clearly a story that I think many of us want to continue to follow.



Oconee County librarians accept the donation of *In Her Shoes*, history of the SC League of Women Voters, 1920—2020

League Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

The League of Women Voters has taken on the mission of making Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) an integral part of everything we do. As part of this mission, we in the Clemson area will model who we aim to be by:

- 1) Reviewing our nominations process, as well as all printed and digital marketing, through a DEI lens;
- 2) Setting up DEI training, with help from multiple resources, potentially including LWV of South Carolina DEI Coordinator **Charmaine Clowney**, LWV of South Carolina Director for Racial Justice **Trish Montgomery** and her Racial Justice Program, the Clemson Area Pledge to End Racism (CAPER), and other professional associations;
- 3) Revising the membership dues structure as appropriate to promote diversity; and,
- 4) Increasing awareness of the Native American influence on League geography by devoting specific moments to recognize and honor the indigenous ancestral land we inhabit.

We will seek to expand our mission impact by forming partnerships around core issues with other service organizations which reflect and honor the diversity of our community. As part of this mission, we will also promote individual learning through book groups, with goals including deepening self-awareness, recognizing bias, asking curious questions of others, and checking our assumptions and “truths.”

A number of written and video resources are recommended below. We will be paying particular attention firstly to *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, by **Robin DiAngelo**, and then to *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying Our Democracy* by **Carol Anderson**, Chair of African American Studies at Emory University.

Other highly recommended books include:

- “Caste,” by **Isabel Wilkerson**
- “Between the World and Me,” by **Ta Nehisi Coates**
- “How to Be an Antiracist,” by **Ibram Kendi**
- “Walking with the Wind” and “March,” both by **John Lewis**
- “The Person You Mean to Be,” by **Dolly Chugh**
- “Begin Again,” by **Eddie Glaude Jr.**
- “The Fire Next Time,” by **James Baldwin**
- “The Women’s Hour,” by **Elaine Weiss**

Recommended movies and documentaries, many available on Amazon, Vudu, YouTube, and/or Netflix, include: *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Glory*, *Amistad*, *The Help*, *Hidden Figures*, *I Am Not Your Negro*, *Fences*, *The Vote*, and *Ada B Wells: The Advocate*.

We encourage all League members to join us in this important work. Please e-mail **Ruth Reed** or **Michael Wood** if you would like to take an active role.

Submitted by Michael Wood

Pickens County NAACP/LWV Voter Outreach

The Clemson Area LWV sponsored a myriad of voter education programs in the months leading up to the November 3 election. One of these was to conduct outreach to unregistered Pickens County residents in collaboration with the Pickens County Branch of the NAACP. The call for volunteers was made by League Chapter President **Ruth Reed**, and in early September a virtual meeting was held to orient potential volunteers about tasks associated with getting this job completed by the October 3 deadline to register to vote. After Pickens NAACP President and League member **Shelia Crawford** completed this zoom meeting, Ruth distributed lists of unregistered voters. A total of sixteen League members began hitting the phone lines and addressing postcards and **Toni King** took on the role of coordinating the project. The list of unregistered voters was obtained from the VAN System. NGP VAN is the leading technology provider to Democratic and progressive campaigns and organizations, as well as nonprofits, municipalities, and other groups, offering clients an integrated platform of the best fundraising, compliance, field, organizing, digital, and social networking products.

Clemson area LWV volunteers were able to reach or leave voter registration messages with nearly 200 households and sent postcards to over 400 additional people. The project allowed other citizens, some Clemson University students, and Black Lives Collective to join in the project as well. With one of the project goals being to turn out the African American vote, postcards were mailed to every unregistered voter and every registered voter. The project also included support to voters in the completion of the Census if needed. On the downside, we found there were over 450 disconnected phones or other non-contact attempts including twenty deceased persons' names. Those efforts were not in vain, however, as the data League members have updated will be used to correct/update lists that will be used in the future and passed on to our voter election office for updates where possible.

Some of the people reached who were already registered, or who could not vote because they were not citizens, expressed appreciation that such outreach was going on. Sadly, a few hung up on us too, (but we are not League members for the kudos, right?). Because the lists had so many disconnected or unreachable contacts it is difficult to measure impact in registering voters. The project was a success judging from the phone calls of questions the Branch received once the postcards were mailed. The only data the Voter Election Office was able to give us at this time is that in 2016 Pickens County had a 55% voter participation, but in 2020 the participation is 75%. Go Clemson Area LWV great job, but there is still work to be done!

Submitted by Toni King and Sheila Crawford

Member News

With great sadness, we announce the death of long-time and valued member, **Jane Polk** on November 10. In 1977, Jane and her husband **George** moved to Clemson, and she soon found ways to contribute to her new community. She was very active at Fort Hill Presbyterian Church and over the course of forty-four years her service there included: two terms as an Elder; Chair of both the Congregational Care and the Christian Action Committees; as well as in many other areas. Working through the Communities Ministries Committee, Jane's diligent efforts greatly contributed to the creation of Safe Harbor II, a domestic violence shelter. She was a dedicated member of the League for many years and will be missed by all.

New Member Bio



**Let's welcome
Amanda Wong to
the Clemson League
of Women Voters.**

Amanda Frasier Wong lives in Central with her husband, **Stephen**, two kids, **Maxwell** (9) and **Ada** (6), and two dogs. They love living in the woods by a creek, and they spend as much time as they can enjoying the lakes and foothills nearby. Amanda also really likes gardening, jogging and reading. She grew up in Gainesville, Florida, where her mom was—and still is—actively involved with the LWV.

For thirteen years, Amanda has felt lucky to work at Self-Help, a national community development financial institution with a mission to create and protect economic opportunity for all. Since 2012, she has happily worked remotely as her family has followed her husband's coaching job around the country. Stephen now coaches Clemson's Women's Rowing Team. Maxwell and Ada, for their part, always feed the dogs and fill the house with laughter.

Certification Process for Provisional Ballots

On November 6 at 12:55, six Pickens County Election Commission members, three employees of the Voter Registration Office, four provisional ballot voters, and I attended the certification meeting in Pickens. We reviewed and discussed 140 questionable ballots.

Some of the more interesting ones that we saw were voters who went to the wrong precinct (these were not approved); voters whose house address was wrong (these stood approved after some discussion); voters who were archived because they did not respond to a letter, and had not voted recently (these were approved); and voters who lived outside the county (these were not approved).

Also signatures were questioned, expired licenses were questioned, and an alleged dead man had to be called to prove he was living before his vote could be counted. An 85-year-old disabled man had no valid I.D., but they decided this was a reasonable impediment. Unfortunately, one young person was denied the right to vote because he claimed his teacher did not turn in his registration; therefore, he was not a registered voter.

According to the Director, 72% of the registered voters in Pickens County voted. There were many absentee and early voters. 38% voted on November 3. This was a record for this county. This was a cultural experience you should try. You will learn something new every time and it will be quite entertaining.

In League, Cheryl Lee, Voter Service

LWVCA Safe & Fair Elections Group (SFEG)

Among the various election-driven activities of the League this fall, the Safe & Fair Elections Group (SFEG) formed to find ways in which we could assist our three County Elections Offices and their Boards carry out safe and fair elections.

The outcome has resulted in developing relationships with the Directors and some of the Boards which we hope will serve us well in coming elections. LWV poll managers were delighted to see how much vigilance goes into the intensive process of voting, training, tabulation and reporting. We witnessed first-hand how difficult it would be to have widespread fraud in the system and gained great respect for the South Carolina Election Board.

Pickens LWVCA members worked in precincts and in election offices. In Oconee, ten LWVCA members monitored the Collection Boxes (Ballot Drop off) outside of the Elections Office in the weeks leading up to November 3. Anderson members joined with the Women's Civic League of Anderson to assist in election activities. LWV members attended Ballot Certification hearings in all three counties. To allay fears about the election and encourage the vote, we submitted a Letter to the Editor of eight newspapers in the area. It appeared in all eight.

Another benefit for the fourteen members participating in SFEG was the increased knowledge we gained about the election process. On the surface it appears simple; the details are complicated!! For example, one of our members just wrote "I learned at the Oconee County Board of Elections Ballot Certification hearing that if your driver's license is expired, your provisional ballot will be rejected." Who knew?

Over the years, League members have been encouraged to attend local government meetings and report back to membership. We hope that out of this work, several of our members will choose to attend meetings of County Elections Boards. Oconee and Anderson County Elections Boards meet quarterly; Pickens County Elections Board meets monthly.

Pickens County saw a record turnout of voters, both absentee and in person on Nov. 3. In total, we had a 72.5% turnout of registered voters. Poll watchers from both parties gave positive feedback to the main office in regard to poll workers' conduct and their ability to be present. And we are very glad to say our county results were certified as of 3:35 pm Friday Nov 6th.

Submitted by Lillian Boatwright, Secretary of the Pickens County Election Commission

The precinct in which I was a poll manager had a 69% turnout. A busy day, and it ran very smoothly for the most part. There were a few registration issues with finding the voter in the system, most of which were easily resolved. There were two young people who had not registered by the Oct 4 deadline, so, sadly, could not vote.

Submitted by Voter Editor Mike Ellison

<i>Clemson City Council</i>	<i>1st and 3rd Monday, 6:30 pm</i>	<i>Pickens County School Board</i>	<i>4th Monday, 7:00 pm</i>
<i>Seneca City Council</i>	<i>2nd Tuesday, 6:00 pm</i>	<i>Oconee County School Board</i>	<i>3rd Monday, 6:00 pm</i>
<i>Pickens County Council</i>	<i>1st Monday, 6:30 pm</i>	<i>Anderson Co. School Board</i>	<i>3rd Monday, 6:00 pm</i>
<i>Oconee County Council</i>	<i>1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm</i>		
<i>Anderson County Council</i>	<i>2nd and 4th Tuesday, 6:00 pm</i>		

Dues are due! Donations are always welcome.

Copies of the South Carolina League history, *In Her Shoes*, have arrived.

You can send one check for all of these:

Item	Cost/ item	# ordered	Total cost
Dues—individual		_____	\$60
Dues—family		_____	\$90
Dues--student		_____	\$10
Donation		_____	
Book: "In Her Shoes"		_____	\$15
Total		_____	

Make check out to LWVCA and mail to: LWVCA, P.O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633