



THE VOTER

November 2014 Vol. 41 No. 8

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area

Co-President's Message

Candidate forums, voter registration drives and more forums. This is what League of Women Voters members across the country are doing during the months preceding the November General Election to assure all those eligible to vote are registered and informed on the issues. Our League concentrated this year on registering potential voters in local high schools and colleges and voters in assisted living centers.



The forum is part of the voter education arm of the League. Since early spring this year, the League has sponsored candidate forums for special elections, city elections and countywide elections covering Anderson, Pickens and Oconee counties. The League greatly appreciates all the candidates that participated in these forums, as we believe this is one way the electorate is educated about both the issues and the candidates themselves. The question arose this year as to why Leagues hold forums using the format they do. Other organizations hold debates in which candidates are invited to sit and members of audiences can ask one or more candidates a question from the floor. Conversely, the League uses a format as defined by the Internal Revenue regulations for 501 (c) (3) organizations as well as guidelines from the Federal Election Commission. This allows us to sponsor nonpartisan voter education projects such as the forums as long as we follow certain rules insuring that there is impartial treatment of all candidates. To ensure a nonpartisan persona, we accept written questions from the audience that can be addressed to all candidates for a particular office or race. In cases where there is only one candidate for an office or no more than one candidate will agree to participate, we will not conduct a forum. The League feels that giving a single candidate the ability to answer questions from the audience when his/her opponent is not present gives an unfair advantage to that candidate, jeopardizing the League's nonpartisan policy. As is the case in the Upstate, Leagues throughout the country are concerned about the trend of incumbents declining to participate in voter's guides and forums sponsored by the League. Thanks to co-president Janie Shipley's correspondence with national and state League leadership, we discovered a non-debate "meet and greet" format that Leagues across the country are using, especially when incumbents decline to participate in a forum. The "meet and greet" gives candidates an opportunity to educate voters on their positions in an informal setting, rather than the structured forum. During the early part of the 20th century, the founders of the League of Women Voters believed in and promoted candidate forums. This tradition of holding candidate forums as a way to educate the voters continues on today in local Leagues. Nonetheless, in an era when incumbents tend to decline participation in forums, a "meet and greet" format will be considered as another avenue for voter education.

Yours in League,

Sandra

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THE VOTER

League of Women Voter Clemson Area
P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633
www.lwvclemsonarea.org

Sandra Gray, Co-President
Janie Shipley, Co-President
Holley Ulbrich, VP/Program & Action
Diana Stafford, Secretary
Bill Hare, Treasurer

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Mike Stafford, Chair Finance/Fundraising

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tues, Nov 4	Election Day
Tues, Nov 11	BOARD MEETING , Clemson City Hall, 5:00 pm
Tues, Nov 18	GENERAL MEETING, School Funding with Ken Weichel , OLLI, 7 p.m.
Thurs, Nov 27	Thanksgiving
Tues, Dec 16	Holiday Party, OLLI, 7 p.m.
Sat, Jan 31, 2015	LEAD: League Education and Advocacy Day, Columbia, SC, details forthcoming Refer to lwvclemsonarea.org for updates and current information

November's General Meeting

How have policy makers for public education in South Carolina, along with the other 49 states, lost sight of educating children to be productive citizens? And where do we need to focus our priorities to foster improvements?

Dr. Ken Weichel will give us an overview of our current funding methodology, with an emphasis on Oconee, Pickens, and Anderson counties. In addition, he plans to provide an update on charter schools, on-line schools, among other current developments in education.

Weichel, a retired educator who has served schools in Pickens and Oconee counties, is the featured speaker at the November 18 meeting. The program includes a question-and-answer session.

The South Carolina LWV's position is one that affirms public state-supported education at all levels, which is high quality, effective, equitable, fully funded and accountable.

The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. in the main meeting room of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute in Clemson at 100 Thomas Green Blvd. in Patrick Square. The social gathering begins at 7:00 p.m. and the program starts promptly at 7:30. Directions to the OLLI Center are online at www.clemson.edu/centers-institutes/olli/documents/Charles_K_Cheezem_Education_Center.pdf

Submitted by Anita Bearden

General Meeting Topics

Nov 18: Ken Weichel – Education Funding

Dec 16: Holiday Party

Jan 20: Suzanne Rhodes – Nuclear Waste

Feb 17: David Dreher – Immigration Issues

March 17: Nicole Paluzzi, Janie Shipley and Holley Ulbrich – Corporate Personhood, Campaign Finance Reform and Reproductive Choice

April 21: Sonya Albury-Crandall – Update on Health Care

Fund Raising Results – To Date

As of October 20, 2014, League supporters contributed \$600 to our Education Fund and \$345 to our general use fund. We dare to predict further contributions will be made to this already successful effort! Thank you to everyone who contributed!

Submitted by Bill Hare



Please Be Gently Reminded: Dues Are Due!

A View of Pickens County Schools as Presented by the Candidates

Notes taken by Eleanor Hare

Candidates for the District 2 seat on the Pickens County School Board presented their views in a forum at the Central Town Hall on Wednesday, October 15, 2014. League members contributing to the success of this forum were Elizabeth Adams, Anita Bearden, Sandra Gray, Bill Hare, Cheryl Lee, Nicole Paluzzi, Frances and Don Plotnik, Aleta Robinson, and Michael Stafford.

The candidates told us that:

- Salaries in Pickens County are \$3,000 to \$5,000 lower than salaries in all our neighboring counties.
- Supplements for extra-curricular activities (band, ...) are 25% below everybody around us
- Pickens County spends 89% of their funds on salaries and fringe benefits

Much of the discussion at the forum was concerned with funding issues. A question about fund raising by students emphasized the financial shortfall:

- Phillip Bowers: There's a cookie dough fundraiser in Six Mile.
- Kevin McKenzie: operating budget of schools cut to minimums in recent years, one school cut in half this year alone. We have asked our students of all ages to do the fundraising in our communities. At least 3 so far this school year, neighbors are feeling obligated
- Tony Qualkinbush: There is not a lot of money left in the school budget. The \$250 debit card, given to teachers for beginning of year expenses, will not last this whole semester. We have got to figure out how to turn this around. Basic classroom needs are falling way short.
- Jennifer Wood: We're on our 3rd or 4th fundraiser this year.

What steps need to be taken to bring Pickens County salaries in line with our adjoining counties?

- Qualkinbush: We have not honored the step increases. He thinks that the Board has saved enough money in the General Fund Balance to recover one of the lost step increases now. We have to catch up. We need some creative partnership ideas.
- Wood: We need to be creative. People need to be paid for the job. Pickens County pays only slightly more than the Corridor of Shame. Morale is suffering.
- Bowers: We have a self-created crisis. We need change on the School Board.
- McKenzie: "Make it a priority and I would." Evaluation of funding model starting with complicated Base student cost which is a complicated index and we are severely state underfunded totaling \$700 or \$800 per student accounting for inflation. State underfunding puts burden on the local counties.

What building expenditures are necessary?

- Bowers: There's money there to increase salaries – just a matter of priorities.
- McKenzie: You can't go back and un-build the buildings, we are obligated to fulfill our debt requirements. Maintenance and teacher pay are priorities. After school activities contribute engaged students. The external auditor noted that revenues are going to have to increase eventually based on current budget structure.
- Qualkinbush: We must service building debt. Can we refinance? Millage rate increases alone won't do it. Salary supplements are 25% below everybody around us. We are losing talent. After-school activities are a great tool for keeping at risk kids in school.
- Wood: We will have more maintenance cost and we need to protect our investment in good schools by maintenance.

Continued on next page . . .

Did you know? The Affordable Care Marketplace reopens Nov. 15.

Pickens County School Board Candidates Forum Continued from previous page**School Board Prayer:**

- **Wood:** In the diverse community that we have, we should not use funds to fight court cases.
- **Bowers:** I was opposed to backing down on prayer. “If you elect Christians, you’re going to get Christian prayer. If we get sued, fight it.”
- **McKenzie:** When the group Freedom from Religion sent the district a Fax, they immediately folded. Need to stand up for what we believe in and challenge it when we feel strongly enough about it. What message did we send our students about standing up for their beliefs?
- **Qualkinbush:** referred to Matthew 6: 5,6, which tells us to pray privately, not for public show. “I’ll be prayed up before I get to the meeting.” The audience laughed when he said that he might also need to pray after the meeting.

Other:

- **Bowers:** stated that he sees an “anti-Christian bias in the schools” and he “intends to do something about that.” He also thinks that the state is too involved in education. “I stood up against Common Core and I still oppose it. I fought against teaching evolution. Life is not important anymore. We have to get the values right.”
- **McKenzie:** Graduation rate at ~77%. Leverage resources like CTC to retain students, might could increase graduation by providing a track of 4 CaTE courses. Students who take at least 4 CaTE courses have a 96% graduation, earn \$25,000-\$26,000, compared to \$17,000 for those who do not graduate.
- **Qualkinbush:** is a pastor, coach and has served as president of the local PTO. He has done after-school tutoring for Hispanic children who were having trouble in school because they could not speak English.
- **Wood:** has a B.S. in Civil Engineering from Clemson University and a Masters degree in public administration. She is a mother of 2 elementary aged children in Pickens County schools.



Phillip Bowers, Kevin McKenzie, Tony Qualkinbush, Jennifer Wood



Frances Plotnik (l) and Cheryl Lee (r) helped out at the Pickens County School Board Forum.



Nicole Paluzzi moderated.

Candidate Forum for Oconee County School District 1

A candidate forum was held for Oconee School District 1 candidates Jerry Lee (incumbent) and challenger Allen Brewer on Monday evening, October 6, 2014 at the Duke Energy World of Energy Auditorium. Mr. Lee served on the school board 1978-1994 and then again for two terms during the past 8 years. Mr. Brewer ran unsuccessfully for the District 1 seat in 2000. Paula Appling moderated the forum.

Candidates answered questions from a small audience of about 20 attendees for approximately one hour. Answers from both candidates showed they were in agreement on most issues. Both candidates addressed the \$3.5 million budget shortfall in the school district budget, saying the state needs to fully fund education at what they are mandated to do rather than the at the 75% level they are currently funding. They agreed that as the state's economy improves, the rate of school funding should improve. Both candidates agreed that a "common core" curriculum is a good idea but that the current Common Core State Standards need to be studied by educators first and are pleased that the state pulled back on its implementation. An important issue for the District 1 constituents was the future of the Tamassee-Salem High School with the construction of the new Walhalla High School on Highway 11. Mr. Lee could not predict what might happen to the Tamassee-Salem High School in the future but added that there are no plans to close the school. Mr. Brewer emphasized the need to keep the Tamassee Salem High School open so as to provide a choice of school size to the area students. Both Lee and Brewer felt the federal guidelines on nutrition in the schools are resulting in wasted food since the students do not eat the meals served. A question about whether they supported fiscal autonomy for the school district was the only question that brought a difference of opinion between the two candidates. Lee was in favor of fiscal autonomy for the school board while Brewer was opposed. However, both agreed this was a moot point since the passage of Act 388.

Thanks to League members Reggie Turetzky, Diana and Mike Stafford, Anita Bearden, Edna Elfont, Paula Appling and Sandra Gray for helping with the forum.

Submitted by Sandra Gray

SAVE ALL VOTES SC

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina formed an initiative in early 2014 to build a statewide network and database of individuals and organizations dedicated to registering, educating, and engaging voters and protecting their rights. Unlike many other states, South Carolina lacked a statewide coalition of voting rights advocates. Our mission is to grow this network, once established, into a permanent partnership comprised of non-partisan groups that have statewide, regional, and local footprints. This project is supported by a grant from the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

Go to saveallvotessc.org for all your election questions!

Influence Public Opinion with your Personal Letters to the Editor

Send a personal letter to the editor! Try to keep your letter to 250 words (some will accept longer, but most will not!) and focus on specifics. Send your letter to each paper individually.

GREENVILLE NEWS:

letters@greenvillenews.com

bpadgett@greenvillenews.com

JOURNAL: life@upstatetoday.com

ncannada@upstatetoday.com

ANDERSON INDEPENDENT

letters@independentmail.com

KEOWEE COURIER/WESTMINSTER NEWS

westnews@bellsouth.net

Submitted by Paulette Chassin



Oconee County School Board, District 1 candidates: Jerry Lee (incumbent) and Allen Brewer

**You Want to Contribute . . .
but you don't have a lot of time . . .**

Anita Bearden, our new Publicity Coordinator, used to be a News Hound. When she was a reporter, her favorite thing to report on was people - she is absolutely fascinated by people and loves to report on where they came from and how they got to where they are now. She was at a meeting (probably a political rally) a bunch of years ago with a past president who was campaigning at the time and wanted to know if he liked pizza and if he had chickens when he was a kid. (If you want to more about Anita, ask her about the picture she took of the lady with the really long fingernails. Maybe that was at a political rally too?) This job she has now couldn't be more perfect for her: she comes to us with professional experience. Because of that experience, she looks at this job with a professional eye.

I recently learned from Anita, that in THE BUSINESS, records are important. Different types of data are important and all for different reasons. Something that Anita wants to do is to increase our visibility in the media. I thought that was just a matter of getting copy out to publications and radio stations. But to do that, she needs to know that the media is publishing what we send out, so she needs multiple eyes and ears. In the publishing business (as it is with politics), it helps to have a personal relationship with the publisher (or legislator). Now that you have a personal relationship with Anita, will you give her a hand? Whenever you hear something on the radio about the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area or read something in the print media, or see something on the Internet, will you shoot her an email? Here's what she needs:

<i>Form to Report Published/ Aired Information about LWV CA</i> Please email completed form to Publicity Coordinator Anita Bearden at b9anita@gmail.com
Your Name:
Today's Date:
I read/heard the following League news as follows:
Name of Media Outlet or Website:
Date of publication or broadcast:
In print media, section and page number:
In radio/TV/cable media, time and day and name of program:
On website, copy link to actual web page and include date:
Other information you think important to include in the record:

Submitted by Paula Appling

MORE VOTER REGISTRATION!

Several league members celebrated National Voter Registration Day, September 23, 2014, by helping 42 potential voters to register. On the Clemson University Library bridge, Sandra Gray, Cheryl Lee, Diana and Mike Stafford enjoyed a windy setup that turned out to be a beautiful day. Pattilee Tate also showed up to help us. The student organization Civics and Service House sponsored us. By making a concerted effort at local high schools, colleges, and other public venues, Clemson Area League of Women Voters made a large dent in helping people to register. We also answered many questions of registered voters who are unsure about voter ID laws.

Also in October, Holley Ulbrich distributed the sample ballot for the precinct that votes at Clemson Downs to all apartment residents and homeowners.

Submitted by Cheryl Lee

There is NOT an App for That!

The barcodes on the items we buy are standard. The language of barcodes may be unfamiliar to us, but, like translation from Spanish, "uno" is always "one" and "dos" is always "two." A barcode scanner can be bought for under \$20 that will unfailingly translate any barcode. Barcode scanning apps, even free ones, are available for your smart phone.

But, the barcodes on the ballots printed by the new Elections Systems & Software (ES&S) voting machine are different. A barcode scanner won't translate them. Neither will an app.

Why did ES&S decide to use barcodes that we can't read on their ballots when they could have used standard barcodes?

And, why did they use barcodes? These barcodes that we can't read are the only way the vote is counted!

Submitted by Eleanor Hare

OBSERVER CORPS**Clemson City Council Meeting October 20, 2014**

The week prior to the October 20 council meeting inspection of Loftis Apartments revealed deficiencies that disallowed the issuance of certificates of occupancy (COs). Property managers told students the apartments were ready anyway. This resulted in frustration for students and parents who brought their belongings to the site expecting to move in. City inspectors spent many hours mitigating the situation and are sending out updates daily to those who sign up for emails.

Mayor Cook issued a proclamation declaring the week of October 20th Archive Awareness Week. The proclamation will be presented to Brenda Burke of the Clemson University Library that houses many years of unique material available for research and study.

Rick Cotton, city administrator, presented a draft of the Storm Water Management Ordinance of October 2014 developed in compliance with applicable federal and corresponding state stormwater discharge (NPDES) regulations (40 C.F.R. § 122.26, § 122.32, and S.C. Regulation 61-9.122.26, 61-9.122.32) developed pursuant to the Clean Water Act. Its purpose is to protect the general health, safety and welfare of the people of the City of Clemson, to protect the natural assets and resources of the city for posterity, to protect the lands and waters from the effects of excessive soil erosion and sedimentation, to reduce siltation of streams and lakes, to prohibit clogging of drainage channels, to reduce excessive flood damage, and to allow for the avoidance of damage to the property of adjacent landowners from flooding. Discussion centered on the steps of the process and cost of this initiative. It is anticipated that cost will be covered through a utility fee of \$4 per residence and something comparable for commercial property. Rick Cotton told council there would be more to come on this program in subsequent council meeting.

Andy Blondeau, assistant city administrator, presented a draft of the policy to govern the use of the proposed electronic message board to be placed at the Flag Plaza at the intersection of Tiger Boulevard and Highway 76. There is a need to prioritize the message, giving first choice to city events.

Staff reports: October 28 at 1 pm is scheduled for the Planning for Old Calhoun District. The city has submitted a proposal summary to Amtrak to keep passenger depot station open. CAT meetings with TCTC and Southern Methodist University were held to update routing and will be followed up in 2015. Three firms will be interviewed for their plans to develop the Pacolet property near Old Stone Church on October 30 and 31. Group health insurance bids will be out November 3. December 5 is the date for the city awards meeting and dinner. Rick Cotton met with Steve Figueroa who announced a national triathlon would be held in Clemson in late April 2015, bringing 1200 participants to the area.

Council approved the replacement of 17 streetlights on Highway 93 with LED fixtures and the addition of 16 LED light to the existing poles. The cost to the city is \$5201 and Duke Energy will do the work during the 2014 Christmas season.

Butch Trent who is not seeking re-election in November proposed an amendment to the City of Clemson Code of Ordinance related to compensation for mayor and members of City Council to correspond to the average of 12 SC cities of similar size. He proposed a salary of \$10,000 for the mayor (currently receiving \$5,500) and \$6000 (currently receiving \$3000). The last time salaries were raised was 2005. Council unanimously approved Trent's proposal.

A public hearing for a series of proposed amendments to the City Zoning Ordinance is scheduled for Nov 3 at 6 pm at City Council Chambers.

Submitted by Linda Gahan

Pickens County School Board Meeting October 27, 2014

Present at the Pickens County School Board meeting were Dr. Swords, Mrs. Edwards, Mr. Saitta, Dr. Merck, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Gillespie, and Dr. Cooper.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Bill Roach talked to the Board about capital improvement needs and how the Pickens County School District was hoping to shift away from deferred maintenance toward preventive maintenance. Mr. Shelton commented that he liked the plan and was all in favor of moving that direction. Such a plan keeps the public, the school staff and the board from being surprised.

Much of the meeting focused on the Supreme Court's recent ruling that legislative bodies can begin their meetings with prayer. Because the policy was written per year, and the current year was 1/3 over, a provision would need to be passed to allow prayer at the beginning of meetings for the duration of the year. Mr. Saitta presented a thick folder of evidence that, while there was risk in beginning prayer mid-year, the benefits far exceeded the risk. Dr. Swords made a motion to table the motion, seconded by Mrs. Edwards, saying that more studying needed to be done regarding the risks, what groups the concerns might come from and what the responses might be. After some discussion, the motion was tabled. During the comments portion of the meeting, Mr. Gillespie said that he would vote in favor of having prayer before a meeting. Mr. Saitta voiced that he thought that others were trying to kill the motion and Mr. Shelton offered that they were not trying to kill the motion, but just wanted more time to study what the possible repercussions might be.

Clemson City Council 1st and 3rd Monday, 7:30 pm.
 Seneca City Council 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm.
 Pickens County Council 1st and 3rd Monday, 7:00 pm.
 Oconee County Council 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm.

Anderson County Council 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm
 Pickens County School Board 4th Monday, 7:30 pm.
 Oconee County School Board 3rd Monday, 6:00 pm.
 Anderson Co. School Board 3rd Monday, 6:00 pm

Contribution Form

League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area LWVCA, P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____ Phone (opt) _____

I wish my contribution to remain anonymous.

I wish my contribution to be tax deductible where allowed by law. My check is made out to the "*League of Women Voters Ed Fund*" which is a 501(c)(3) organization.

I wish to support the League's action priorities. My check is made out to the "League of Women Voters" and is not tax-deductible.

League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area

P. O. Box 802
 Clemson, SC 29633