

SOUTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

As this is written, the very truncated 2020 legislative session is limping towards conclusion. The Senate will meet again on September 2 and the House September 15. Both are expected to take up measures to ensure the safety of voters who might be endangered by the COVID-19 pandemic, as they did for June primaries. By the time this is in print the outcome should be history. At present we can only hope that the success of the League and partners in obtaining election measures for safety in the June primaries has been repeated, along with additional measures needed

We will remain committed to working on redistricting to protect the rights of voters to have meaningful choices in our general elections

given the expected very high turnout for the general election.

However, this resolution will occur very late, putting election officials and voters in limbo until only a short time before absentee voting begins. To underline the nonpartisan nature of our concerns, the League has also entered an amicus brief in *Duggins v Lucas*, a petition to the SC Supreme Court to rule for the protection of voters by requiring the measures recommended by SEC Director Marci Andino.

Moving toward the future, what do we expect from the SC General Assembly in

2021? We don't know how the pandemic will affect the next session, but when they meet, whether in January or later, they will face many unresolved issues.

Crucial "Making Democracy Work" issues will continue to be those in which LWVSC takes a prominent leadership role at the State House. We can expect continuing issues related to elections, as the unusual circumstances of 2020 underline issues that are of more general importance for election safety, security, and access. The dangers around constitutional convention resolutions will be highlighted in a later *SC Voter* issue, but we already know that SC has been targeted by proponents of these resolutions and we must engage ourselves and our partners in a concerted effort to make the public and legislators aware of the great dangers they pose. And, of immense importance, we will remain committed to working on redistricting to protect the rights of voters to have meaningful choices in our general elections, although those efforts will be reshaped by the passage of time.

There are other issues on which the League will offer meaningful advocacy. We hope that education funding, on which the League has already presented extensive testimony through noted economist and LWVSC Co-president Holley Ulbrich, does not get lost in the press of business but continues to receive attention.

Criminal justice reform, especially with respect to racial equity, will surely be in the forefront of legislative concerns.

Legislative committees are meeting through the summer to develop bills. The League will weigh in on these measures, working closely with partner organizations that have longstanding leadership roles in criminal justice. Women's reproductive health, ethics and money in politics, home rule, and other issues will also be the focus of advocacy efforts in 2021.

On all of our issues, we will provide information to members and to partner organizations through all available media. Of special note — thanks to the wonderful efforts of our webmaster Jean Wood, www.lwvsc.org is now a reliable window into current League efforts, so check there frequently! Stay tuned and stay engaged! We have a lot of work to do.

— Lynn Teague, LWVSC Vice-President, Issues and Action

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Co-president's Message: Make a Difference

In the fall of even-numbered years the nation's fancy turns, not at all lightly, to elections. 2020 is not your average election year. A nation deeply divided, with two starkly different visions of the path ahead, rumors of Russian and Chinese interference, virtual conventions, and a pandemic and economic turmoil. For the League of Women Voters, celebrating 100 years of voter education, service and advocacy, the challenge could not be greater. The issues in this election are increasingly about the election process itself. How do we vote safely, ensure access, and get the votes counted in a timely manner when the postal service is under siege and we expect an overwhelming number of mail votes?

Defending democracy is always about processes, not outcomes. We as a League believe that good processes are more likely to lead to good outcomes, outcomes that reflect the shared values and diverse needs and perspectives of our population, and that require willingness to dialogue and compromise. That trust in good process means that protecting electoral democracy is always at the top of the League's to-do list.

Recently a dear friend and former League member asked me to tell her five things she could do to make the election work better — without leaving the house except to vote. So here is what I told her:

1. If you don't trust the mail, vote in person absentee at the election commission office. If you do trust the mail, send for your absentee ballot and return it promptly.

2. Bring along another voter with you to vote in-person absentee on election day. Double the voting power, but spouses don't count! Find someone who might not vote if you hadn't asked.
3. Write to your legislators asking them to approve essential changes in the election for the pandemic—allow the pandemic as an acceptable excuse for absentee voting; keep polling places open, safe and staffed; provide drop boxes for ballots at safe locations; and allow more time for counting ballots.
4. Make sure people you know have the information about when to request an absentee ballot (right now), when in person absentee voting begins (October 5th), where to find a sample ballot and candidate positions on issues (Vote411.org), and upcoming candidate forums online.
5. Make a contribution to at least one candidate, or volunteer to help in at least one campaign (does not apply to League presidents and voter service chairs!).

She outdid my expectations, also volunteering to participate in a voter registration push in connection with the local NAACP.

As I write this message, LWVSC is working on several fronts to ensure safe and accessible elections. Building awareness and support for adding the pandemic as an acceptable reason for early



voting, drop boxes for ballots, having enough polling places and poll workers, and more time for counting ballots continue to be a priority. Letters to the editor on these points from individuals are important. We are working with other organizations on a state supreme court case on the COVID19 issue (as another acceptable reason for absentee voting), which may be resolved by the time of this writing.

A fellow economist has a blog he calls *The Government We Deserve*. One way or another, we will get the government we deserve. Let's do our best as guardians of democracy to ensure that we deserve the kind of government we want.

Stay well. Be safe. Build for the second hundred years.

—Holley H. Ulbrich,
LWVSC Co-president

Find Us Online

Emails from: LWV of South Carolina

If you do not receive these, please let us know by emailing lwwsc.cml@gmail.com.

Facebook: League of Women Voters of South Carolina

Website: lwwsc.org

In Her Shoes:

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina 1920-2020

by Sheila Haney

This long-awaited history of our state League is available for \$15! Royalties go to the League of Women Voters of South Carolina. Local Leagues can buy several copies and sell them to make contributions to the Local League treasury; each local league gets \$5 for each book it sells. LWVSC also gets \$5. A Kindle edition is \$3.59 from Amazon. Ordering your books from Amazon is faster but ordering books through the state or local League puts more of the \$15 in the hands of the League. You can also find an order form on the LWVSC website where you can pay by mailing a check or using PayPal.

IN HER SHOES: A REVIEW

In tribute to the centennial of the League of Women Voters and the 19th Amendment Sheila Haney's book *In Her Shoes: A History of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, 1920-2020* is a timeless gift.

In Her Shoes provides a historical overview of the South Carolina LWV, portraits of several league leaders, and chapters on central policy concerns of the organization. Here we have a book that displays the impact that decades of efforts by women had on one state's constitution, ethics, voting, schools, courts, taxes and fees, and physical environment. One hundred years ago South Carolina was a one party dominated political system shored up by suppressing votes by race, gender, and social class. The League of Women Voters in South Carolina worked against the grain, faced many cultural "givens" rendering their voices unheard and discounted. Yet, they persisted.

The early League of Women Voters in South Carolina was segregated and unquestioning of literacy tests, poll taxes, grandfather clauses, the tenant farmer system, the convict lease system, and other policies that disenfranchised and impoverished people of color. As Sheila Haney writes, racial inequality was the most disturbing part of the South Carolina League's history. Now, many authors, such as Sheila Haney, are filling in the realities of what early practices meant to people of color. The economic and political consequences were and still are devastating.

Persistent, Consistent, Informed Effort.

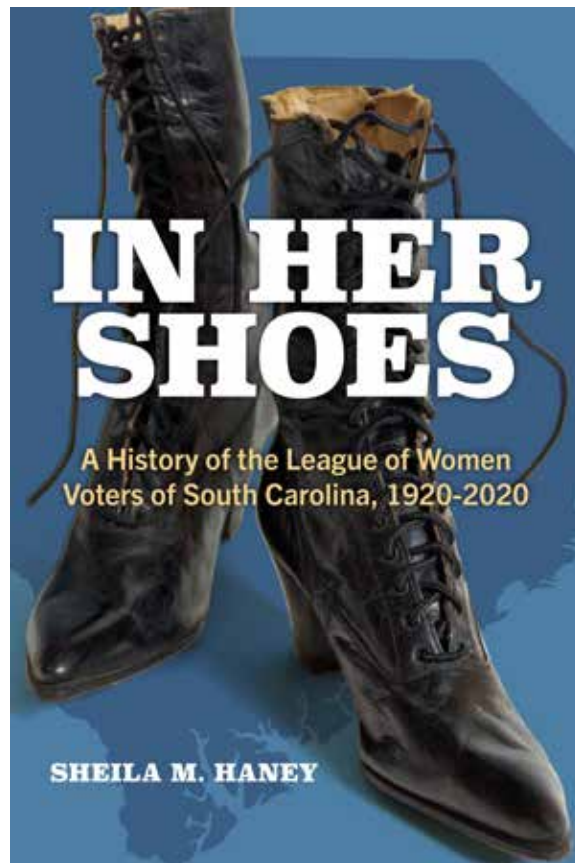
Years of effort were needed to achieve some of the most important reforms the SC LWV worked on. To modernize the antiquated and undemocratic 1890s era South Carolina Constitution was a multi-generational project. The League was persistent in adherence to home rule, open records, campaign finance reform, freedom of information, ethics reform and citizen participation in matters pertaining to utilities regulations, details of taxation

and spending, and consistency in judicial, police, licensing and regulation practices. League efforts helped achieve divorce reforms, domestic violence laws, reproductive health protections, and women's access to education and employment opportunities. Haney shows how beginning in the mid 1980s the League helped defend many policies and practices for the benefit of women from efforts to abolish them. Often the League was the only entity doing nonpartisan research on issues. Many politicians and policy makers respected the League's knowledge about issues and understood that the efforts of league members were aimed at the public good, not partisan advantage.

Systemic Reforms.

Helping register voters is a time-honored tradition of the League. Foundational, also, to League traditions is work which requires by law fair and open registration procedures, reliable voting systems with verifiable results. Haney's book reminds us of how draconian election laws were in South Carolina. They were expressly designed to limit democratic engagement. For instance, residency requirements for voter registration in the state used to be *two years*. On top of that, there were separate and inconsistent residency requirements for counties, cities, and people moving between these jurisdictions. The League helped change these residency requirements that were voting barriers.

The legacy of systemic reforms include: abolition of child labor; raising the age of consent for marriage; having women on juries (not achieved until 1967); improved working conditions in factories and textile mills; improved sanitary conditions that bettered the health of entire communities; clean water efforts; inspection of food for safety and purity;



protecting the public education system, and many more.

When the South Carolina legislature wanted to close the public schools rather than desegregate, the SC LWV opposed that move. The legislature put the issue to voters in a referendum which the LWV also opposed. However, the voters of South Carolina (remember, these voters were white in the 1950s) approved closing the schools. The SC LWV supported the 1965 Voting Rights Act and worked to monitor implementation of voting rights and fair redistricting in Spartanburg and Charleston.

In 1972, with Barbara Moxon as state president, the League began a decades long effort to remove the Confederate flag from the State Capitol. The League was instrumental in the Education Improvement Act of the early 1980s. The League persisted and persists.

— Laura R. Woliver, President,
League of Women Voters Columbia Area

VOTE411 TEAMS AT WORK

The South Carolina VOTE411 Teams are busy getting their Online Voter Guides ready. This involves getting the list of candidates they will cover, getting this data into the Excel Spreadsheet to be loaded into the voter guide. Non-partisan questions are developed for each race and these must be loaded into VOTE411 also. A lot of data must be searched for and loaded into VOTE411. But now comes the hard part, getting candidates to respond! This involves emails, phone calls, letters, and messages on candidate Facebook pages. And I am sure this is not the total list of ways to encourage candidate participation! This year some candidates even asked us when they would receive the questionnaire! And we invite responding candidates to post a graphic on their social media platforms directing voters to go to VOTE411 to learn about them.

In 2020, LWV Charleston is managing voter guides for 77 races and 162 candidates in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties for the November 3 election. We also supported voter guides for the primary election and the special election for SC House District 115, which had a primary, a run-off and an election. In addition, we manage voter guides for the US Senate race and for some SC and US districts that we share with other Leagues, including US Congressional Districts 1 and 6.

All levels of the League have a part in the November election. The Presidential Election is handled by LWVUS including the two major party candidates and all minor party candidates.

In South Carolina, the US Senate is being done by Charleston. The VOTE411 Teams handle the US Congressional Districts as shown below

- District 1 & 6 – Charleston
- District 2 – Columbia
- District 3 – Clemson
- District 4 – Greenville
- District 5 – Spartanburg
- District 7 – Darlington

Below is a listing of how county and city races are covered by Local League VOTE411 teams.

- Beaufort County – Beaufort and Hilton Head-Bluffton Leagues
- Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester Counties – Charleston LWV
- Pickens, Anderson, and Oconee Counties – Clemson LWV
- Richland and Lexington Counties – Columbia LWV
- Aiken County works with Columbia LWV on shared districts
- Darlington County – Darlington LWV
- Greenville, Greenwood and Laurens Counties – Greenville County LWV
- Spartanburg County – Spartanburg LWV

The VOTE411 Teams also advertise the online voting guides to the public. Information is on websites and many other online sites. Articles and letters to the editor are offered to newspapers. Some Leagues are using yard signs as well as handing out information.

And this year, billboards have been added to inform the public of VOTE411. The Columbia, Charleston, Greenville and Beaufort Leagues are planning electronic billboards for this fall encouraging voting and the use of VOTE411 for information. Columbia has four billboards planned for Richland and Lexington Counties. Charleston plans several billboards in the three counties they serve. With electronic billboards, several different designs can be used over time. Beaufort and Greenville are finalizing their billboards at the time of writing this article.

— Jane Turner, LWVSC Voter Service Chair



NONPARTISAN
QUESTIONS ABOUT VOTING?
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Be informed.
Vote informed.
VOTE411.ORG LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
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Examples of the billboards that will be displayed across the state.



EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE REPORT

With the enactment of the federal 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, American public education entered the era of accountability based on academic standards, yearly testing, and individual student scoring results. In South Carolina, the accountability focus was enacted *four years earlier* with passage of the state’s 1998 Education Accountability Act.

As part of the EAA legislation, the 18-member Education Oversight Committee (EOC) was created to track the academic progress of South Carolina’s public schools through assessments based on standardized testing and publicized by individual school and district report cards. From its beginning, the EOC was controversial.

From the first state-developed assessment, the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT), complaints rose about the cost of the test and the untimely reporting of results. From 1999-2008, third through eighth graders took the annual PACT tests in reading, math, social studies, science. From 2003-2018, high schoolers took exams in Algebra, English, Biology and U.S. History and Constitution.

Although tests were given in the spring, individual test results were not issued until August. When the PACT

writing test was added, it was October before results were returned. Educators complained late student scores left little time to address academic problems before the end of the year.

School and district report card scores caused even greater controversy. From the beginning, experts questioned the formula, devised by the EOC, to rate schools based on test scores. Student poverty levels were not considered in initial report card formulas. Noting that research clearly indicates poverty as the greatest predictor of a child’s academic success, Clemson University test experts judged the report cards “inherently unjust” without a poverty indicator. The initial report cards reflected Clemson’s prediction: high poverty districts and schools received low ratings; schools in rich districts were judged excellent or above average.

South Carolina is one of only 13 states that elect their public education superintendent. The EOC has six legislators, five business members and five educators, all legislatively appointed. The governor is a member; the state superintendent, ex officio. With a 17-member Board of Education and an elected superintendent, why

does the EOC have sole power to formulate, design and issue school and district reports cards? Protesting that a new formula that was introduced had received little outside input, the Greenville County school board called for abolishing the EOC. Other districts followed. The movement gained legislative traction in March, when the state Senate voted 25 to 19 to add a provision to abolish the EOC to its omnibus school reform bill (S.419).

In July, an additional controversy emerged when Gov. Henry McMaster allotted \$32 million of federal education relief money *for private school vouchers*. Promoting McMaster’s decision was the pro-school voucher lobbying group, Palmetto Promise Institute, whose executive director is Ellen Weaver of Greenville. Although the EOC identifies itself as an “independent, non-partisan group,” critics noted that Weaver chairs the EOC and was appointed a member in 2016. In past years, the EOC has included outspoken public school critics, but not a member whose job is to lobby for private school grants from public money. The saga continues.

— Sally Huguley, *LWVSC Off Board Education Issue Specialist*

HONORING THE GRIMKÉ SISTERS

The League of Women Voters of Spartanburg County realized a long-time dream on August 18th when they dedicated a mural to South Carolina sisters, Angelina and Sarah Grimké, abolitionists and suffragists in the 19th century — *Determined: A Tribute to the Grimké Sisters*. While the Grimké sisters

They became abolitionists and because they believed that not until women could vote would slavery be abolished, they became suffragists as well.

are typically associated with Charleston, they also spent time in the upstate — at a family farm near Cross Anchor, before leaving South Carolina as young adults

because they were repulsed by slavery. They knew in the 19th century that black lives matter; they became abolitionists and because they believed that not until women could vote would slavery be abolished, they became suffragists as well.

About 60 people gathered for the dedication — wearing masks and socially distanced using six-foot ribbons in suffragist colors to hold and mark the distance between attendees. The mural was designed by Spartanburg artist Nancy Corbin and executed on a wall at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 210 Henry Place, Spartanburg. The site will be completed as a small park and called the “Grimké Connector.” It will

connect the Mary Black Rail Trail and the Mary H. Wright Greenway, both popular walking and biking trails.

In the 1830s, the Grimké sisters were castigated for speaking in public against slavery. They were part of a mass movement of black and white women within abolition who began blending their anti-slavery work with women’s rights activism. “Letters on the Equality of the Sexes” by Sarah Grimké was an important early women’s right treatise. They acted on their beliefs in several ways including identifying and educating the sons of their brother who were born to a mixed race woman. One attended Harvard and another attended Princeton Theological Seminary and became a vice-president of the NAACP.

— Linda Powers, S.C. Voter editor

THE BIRTH OF WOMEN’S EQUALITY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN EQUALITY IN S.C.

Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké were two of the most important women in the history of equal rights and opportunities for all Americans, regardless of gender, skin color, religion or family prestige.

Sarah was born in 1792. Although her family were prominent Episcopalians in Charleston, she decided to become a Quaker and moved to Philadelphia when she was in her late 20s because she had become impressed with the Quaker doctrines and practices of equality. Angelina was born in 1805 so she was thirteen years younger than Sarah. She also believed intensely in equal rights and so decided to join her sister in Philadelphia. Both sisters kept diaries and copies of letters that they wrote and received. (Most of those documents are at the University of Michigan, and I worked with them when I was a history doctoral student there in the 1950s.)

After Sarah and Angelina moved to upstate New York to get away from slavery, they made friends with their brother’s illegitimate sons by a slave mother and paid for them to go to graduate school in the north. Their

nephews, Archibald and Francis Grimké, graduated from a northern college, got doctorates in Ivy League schools and helped found the NAACP.

In the 1830s, the Grimké sisters volunteered as speakers and fund raisers for the antislavery movement. Angelina became famous and was the first woman invited to speak to a state legislature when she spoke to the Massachusetts legislature in 1838 about the evils of slavery. They did not go to the famous Seneca Falls women’s rights convention in 1848 because of illness. However, they were active in setting it up with their friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

When the Civil War was over and African-American men were voting, Angelina and Sarah always went to the polls on election day and cast fake ballots in a “women’s box” to show that women were willing to go to the polls and vote.

Angelina’s granddaughters gave their grandparents’ letters and diaries to the University of Michigan library, where they still reside. I enjoyed handling them in 1958 and realizing that their importance has grown since that time. The famous female historian Gerda Lerner wrote an

outstanding book on the Grimké sisters, which I recommend. The first edition of her book said that the Grimké summer home was in Cross Anchor, which Dr. Lerner incorrectly stated was near Charleston, but Dr. Lerner was glad to change it for the second edition when I told her that Cross Anchor is a long carriage ride from Charleston but close to Spartanburg. I still drive down Highway 56 to Cross Anchor to remember the importance of that area for equal rights for women and African-Americans. The first week we lived in South Carolina, we drove around Spartanburg and Cross Anchor looking for memorials for these two important women. We still haven’t found them. There is also nothing at Cross Anchor where they spent their summers and developed their women’s rights and antislavery ideas. Throughout their lives, these two sisters from South Carolina provided leadership in equal rights for all.

— Alice Hatcher Henderson, Ph.D.

Editor’s Note: Thanks to Alice for keeping the Grimké sisters on our minds; they are now properly recognized and celebrated!



Above: Columbia League hosts 100th anniversary celebration at the Capitol on August 26th.



At left: Karen Mitchell, LL president; Stephen Long, painter; Nancy Corbin, designing artist; and Jeremy Kemp, painter celebrate the mural!



Mary Deku (5-time LL president), Janie Salley, and Brenda Lee Pryce, former SC Representative members of the Southside Heritage Committee celebrate!
Photos: Mike Corbin

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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 men and women who are at least 16 years old. All members receive the *SC Voter*, email communications and news from their local League.

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Your annual or recurring gift empowers voters and defends democracy. You can donate with a one time or recurring gift. Help empower voters and defend democracy. 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	<i>Sarah E. Leverette Circle</i>
\$500 to \$999	<i>Defender of Democracy</i>
\$300 to \$499	<i>Suffragist</i>
\$200 to \$299	<i>Advocate</i>
\$100 to \$199	<i>Supporter</i>
\$99 or less	<i>Friend</i>

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!